The Betrayal

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THE BETRAYAL

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BEING A RECORD OF FACTS CONCERNING NAVAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION FROM THE YEAR 1902 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY

ADMIRAL LORD CHARLES BERESFORD, M.P.

LONDON
P. S. KING & SON
ORCHARD HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER
1911

VA
454
B5

"When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
The truth is great, and shall prevail,
When none cares whether it prevail or not."

COVENTRY PATMORE.

PREFACE

This book is a statement of facts. I have written it, in order that my countrymen should possess the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the truth concerning the naval administration and the naval policy in force during the years from 1902 to the present time, and of estimating for themselves the results of that policy and that administration.

My own view of the results is expressed in the title.

CHARLES BERESFORD,

Admiral.

1, Great Cumberland Place, W.
October, 1911.

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I

THE MAKING OF THE NAVAL OFFICER

I

THE MAKING OF THE NAVAL OFFICER

The fighting efficiency of the Royal Navy depends first of all upon the quality and the ability of its officers. Therefore the selection, the education and the training of officers are matters of paramount importance. And not only do they affect the Navy, but they intimately affect those hundreds of families who give their sons to the service of their country.

During some years prior to 1902, the subject of the selection, education and training of cadets was engaging the consideration of naval officers. It was not that the three branches of the Executive, the Marine and the Engineer were unsatisfactory. Perhaps there was never a time when naval officers of all three departments were more competent or more zealous. But is was felt that the curriculum on board the old *Britannia* needed revision. All

schemes of education need revision from time to time. The naval officer could learn, and did learn, his duties, but it may be said that in some respects, he learned them rather in spite of his theoretical teaching than because of it. His real education was gained, where the sailor always has learned his trade and where alone he can learn it, at sea.

It was also considered that the Marine officer was not permitted under the rules of the Service to take his fair share in the work of the ship.

There was a third element in the situation, which was perhaps the only factor recognized by the public, because it was the theme of trade union agitation on shore. The element in question was the position of the Engineer officer.

When I went to sea, the engineers were artisans who were drafted into the Fleet to work the engines, which were presently to supersede sails. As their responsibilities increased with the development of steam power, they demanded commissioned rank, and received it. The difference in social position, of course, remained. It was this difference

which was the real origin of the trouble. But, as the new generation of Engineers passed through Keyham College, the difficulty was already in process of disappearing.

During some years before 1902, the Engineers' organizations on shore had been pressing the claims of the naval engineer officer upon the Admiralty. A small section of the naval engineers afloat took part in the agitation. They claimed the privilege of being known as Lieutenant-Engineer, Commander-Engineer, Captain - Engineer, Admiral - Engineer. They demanded the power to "punish their own men"; they desired to wear "the curl" of gold braid worn by the executive officer; and they asked for increased pay.

There were thus three matters in which change was suggested: the scheme of education in the *Britannia;* the distribution of duties as regarded the Marine officer; and the claims of the Engineer officer.

The problem might readily have been solved without any break in the continuity of tradition. The curriculum in the *Britannia* should have been improved; the work on

board ship should have been so distributed as to give the Marine officer his fair share; and the case of the Engineers should have been treated on its merits.

Some of the difficulty might have been met by the simple expedient of instituting the common entry of all three branches. The Admiralty, however, while establishing the common entry, chose to abolish at a stroke the whole of the existing system, and to substitute another.

At Christmas, 1902, the Admiralty issued a "Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training and Employment of the Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Marines" (Cd. 1385). This document is known as the Selborne Memorandum.

The effect of the new scheme was to propose the creation of a new kind of naval officer altogether.[1]

What the Navy asked then, and asks now, is whether the naval officer of the future is to be an Executive, a Marine or an Engineer.

No clear reply has been given by the authorities. It has been officially stated that

[1] See Appendix I.

the executive will understand the engineer's duties, that the engineer will be available for executive work, and the Marine will be a sailor and an engineer as well as a soldier. Briefly, it is intended that there shall be "interchangeability."

The position to-day is that if the new officers are competent executives, they will not take charge of the engine-room; if they are competent engineers, they will remain below, and if they are competent soldiers, they will neither direct the ship nor take charge of her engines.

In the First Lord's "Statement Explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1911-1912," it was stated that "the first group of officers entered under the new scheme will, on passing the necessary examination, attain the rank of Sub-Lieutenant in May next," that is, May, 1911.

But at this moment, no one knows whether these new officers will be fully skilled in any one of the three branches of the Service. There is only one thing certain, which is that they cannot possibly be competent in all of them.

The sequence of events which has brought about this very remarkable and disquieting situation, in which the whole fighting efficiency

of the Fleet is involved, is highly perplexing. The crux of the problem was and is the question of specialization.

Either the separating of the Service into the three branches of Executive, Marine and Engineer is essential, or it is not. The principle upon which the division is made is simple enough.

It is that the men who direct the ship and who fight the ship cannot possibly learn their duties unless they devote their whole time to them; and that the men who are charged with the care of the motive power of the ship cannot possibly learn their duties or practise them, unless they devote their whole time to them. It follows that the three branches, Executive, Marine and Engineer, each separate and distinct, are essential to the fighting efficiency of the Service.

The Admiralty admitted the validity of the principle in the Selborne Memorandum of 1902. It was therein laid down that all naval officers should enter the Service upon the same footing, at the age of twelve to thirteen;[1] that they should all receive the

[1] See Appendix II.

same education up to the ages of nineteen to twenty; but that, having then attained the rank of Sub-Lieutenant, specialization should begin, and should be "definite and final."

"Henceforward," it was stated, "their education must be differentiated to make them fit to perform those specialized duties which are the product of modern science."

The phrase, "the product of modern science," is not strictly accurate. Specialization, or division into three branches, is the result of centuries of development of the art of sea warfare. But the intention of the Admiralty was at that time quite clear. It was that the preliminary training should be common to all three branches, and that when specialization took place, it should be definite and final.

The conclusion to be drawn from the Selborne Memorandum, although it was not quite explicit with regard to the point, was that there was to be no interchangeability among the three branches. It followed that, as heretofore, only the executive branch would command ships and Fleets.

The objection raised at the time was that

specialization, being postponed to an age (nineteen to twenty) so advanced, could not be effective. It was held by a great body of opinion in the Navy then, as now, that specialization should begin much earlier if it was to confer a thorough training. A competent engineer requires ten years' training; a Marine officer should be trained in his regiment; and an executive officer should be accustomed to deal with men as soon after his entry into the Service as possible.

These conditions were actually fulfilled under the old system, which did actually produce most efficient officers in all three branches.

Apart from the fatal defect of the inadequacy of the specialist training, the Selborne scheme might have been adapted to the requirements of the Service. But three years after the publication of the Selborne Memorandum, and two years after the new scheme came into operation, there was issued (in 1905) the Cawdor Memorandum (Cd. 2791), in which the system was altered in essential particulars.[1]

In the Cawdor Memorandum, it was definitely stated that interchangeability

[1] See Appendix III.

among all three branches was contemplated. It was stated that the Committee appointed to consider the subject under Admiral Sir Archibald Douglas had reported "that there will be no need for a final division into the three branches, and that specialisation for a period only is necessary, as opposed to classification into separate lines."

The report of the Douglas Committee was not published, nor was any mention made of the fact that a Minority report condemned certain proposals as invalidating the whole scheme.

The reason adduced to account for this momentous change with regard to specialization was that the first two years' experience of the work of the children under training at Osborne had enabled the Admiralty to "forecast the general state of professional knowledge of the new officers when they arrive at the rank of Sub-Lieutenant."[1] That forecast was represented as proving to the Admiralty that they were justified in deciding that "all Executive, Engineering and Marine duties will be performed by Executive officers of common entry and training, who will

[1] See Appendix IV.

specialize for the different duties without separating into permanent and distinct branches. The consequence of this development of the original proposals is that there will be in future only one class of officer in all departments, and, whether performing Engine-room, Marine, Gunnery, Torpedo, or Navigation duties, *all will be equal and all will be Executive officers.*"

The real reason for introducing this sudden innovation was that there was great difficulty in obtaining volunteers for the Engineer branch. Under the old system there was no such difficulty. But under the new scheme, which attracted to a large extent a richer class, there was an evident disposition to avoid the engine-room, and a prospect that, when any given Sub-Lieutenant was entered for the engineering branch, his parents, being able to afford the required expenditure, would remove him from the Service. It was this danger which suddenly determined the Admiralty so to modify the scheme as to persuade the young officers, their parents, and the public, that the same chance of attaining the positions of a Captain of a ship, and of

an Admiral commanding a Fleet, was offered to all.

The attraction thus presented is a complete delusion. Under no circumstances is it possible that a Marine officer or an Engineer officer, who has thoroughly qualified himself in his own profession, should command a ship or a Fleet.

Yet the same misrepresentation appeared in the Press[1] no later than May, 1911, while the first batch of midshipmen were being examined at Portsmouth. It was definitely stated that all officers entered under the new scheme had a chance of commanding a Fleet.[1]

It is of the last importance, both to the Service and to the parents of young naval officers, that the present wholly artificial situation should be understood.

Either the Admiralty have abolished specialization or they have not. If they have abolished

[1] Upwards of 1,500 cadets and midshipmen have already been entered under the new system, and by the existing regulations, no matter in what branch they specialize, or even if they do not specialize at all, each according to his merits will have an opportunity of becoming an Admiral of the Fleet or filling the office of First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

"Naval Officers' Training. First Fruits of the New System."—*The Times*, May 15th, 1911.

it, then the Fleet in a few years' time will be seriously deficient in Marine and in Engineer officers. If the Admiralty have not abolished specialization, then the promise that all the officers entered under the new scheme should be eligible for the command of Fleets cannot be fulfilled.

In the meantime, so deplorable is the confusion resulting from this dilemma, the Admiralty have postponed the period of specialization for another two years.[1]

To suggest that the specialization involved in gunnery, torpedo and navigation duties, is analogous to the specialization required to fit a Marine officer for military duties, and an engineer for mechanical duties, is utterly misleading.

By what means are first-class skilled Engineer officers, and Marine officers trained as soldiers, to be obtained in the future? There can be little doubt that the Admiralty will be compelled to revert to the system of thorough, "definite and final" specialization. In that case, do the Admiralty propose to apply compulsion to officers who do not desire to

[1] See Appendix V.

enter the engineering branch? The result of such action would be deplorable. It can hardly be doubted that many young officers would quit the Service, or that there must be a grave deficiency of officers, in consequence.

Another disastrous change in the original scheme is the abolition of the whole of the shore courses for acting Sub-Lieutenants: the courses at Greenwich, the *Excellent*, the *Vernon* and the Navigation School. It was asserted that the young officer could take these courses at sea. The thing is totally impracticable: first, because the gunnery, torpedo and navigation officers at sea have no time to teach their juniors; and second, even had the senior officers the time to spare and the teaching ability required for the purpose, a ship is not fitted with the necessary appliances. The abolition of these courses must result in a grave defect in the course of education.

The main object of the training of an executive officer is to fit him to handle ships and men. Under the new scheme of naval education, a civilian, the Director-General of Naval Education, settles the curriculum, and issues reports upon the results without showing how

those results are attained. The curriculum involves a system of cramming for examinations which is, not only useless for the main object of education but, positively injurious to the efficiency of the young officer.[1]

The proper person to adjudicate upon the capabilities of an officer under training is the captain of a ship in which a few young officers are trained under his supervision. But under the new system the Director-General of Education is supreme.

What is required at this critical moment is the abolition of the office of Director-General of Naval Education, and the reconstitution of the Committee of Education at the Admiralty, whose first business should be to inquire into the whole system. The report should be laid before Parliament.

As matters stand, the fighting efficiency of the Service is imperilled; the public, the parents and guardians of the cadets, and the boys themselves, have been deceived by

[1] The result of the first examination for the rank of sub-lieutenant was that a large percentage failed. The examinations were held for six hours a day for a fortnight, during the last few days of which these young officers were so worn out that they could not answer questions.

misleading representations; the corps of the Royal Marines has been slighted and deprived of its proper complement of officers; and the Engineer branch of the Service has been most unfairly treated. Owing to the increase in the cost of naval education, the old type of engineer parents can no longer afford to enter their sons. In too many cases, the same condition applies to naval officers. It is not desirable that the Navy should become a preserve of the monied classes.

The three branches of the officers of the Fleet represent three links of a chain, which, under the new schemes, it was proposed to amalgamate. It is now stated that the Marine link will be restored. The Engineer link must also be restored. There remains the Executive, and the chain will be once more complete.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Frederick Richards has described the new scheme of education as a "hazardous experiment." The sooner its failure is recognized the better.

II

THE RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINE

II

THE RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINE

The Cawdor Memorandum of 1905, in which were described the changes in the new scheme of naval education established in 1902, arousing grave anxiety among the senior officers of the Fleet, was naturally and rightly the subject of discussion among them. A large proportion of naval opinion undoubtedly held that the policy of the Board was highly inimical to the true interests of the Service. The Admiralty, on their part, were determined to force the scheme through; and for that purpose means were employed which no end, however admirable, could justify.

Events are now beginning to prove that, as the great body of naval opinion held at the time, the policy was wrong. But the merits of the policy itself have nothing to do with the nature of the methods employed to enforce it.

Those methods consisted in the exercise by

the Admiralty of their influence upon any person who might be used to help the scheme, and especially upon persons connected with the Press; in establishing a system of espionage, officers being requested to report secretly upon their brother officers; in utilising the information thus gained to threaten naval officers and thus secure their support; and in endeavouring by illicit means to discredit those who, in the interests of the Service, believed it to be their duty adversely to criticise Admiralty policy.

There is a number of officers whose careers have been ruined because, having been asked their opinion by the authorities, they gave it in all good faith. They are to-day kept without employment.

These are grave charges. Irrefutable evidence of their truth was published in the Press and elicited in Parliament during the year 1909. But other and not less reprehensible incidents occurred which have not been made public, for the simple reason that, under the rule of the cabal formed at the Admiralty, an officer who made known that attempts had been made to suborn him, or that he had been threatened, would gravely jeopardize his career.

One of the worst aspects of the system was the abuse by the Admiralty of the honourable reticence of officers.

Such, however, was the system which, three years after its constitution, was defended by Mr. McKenna before Parliament. That a Minister of the Crown capable of condoning such conduct should have continued to hold office, affords a very grave reflection upon the character of public life to-day.

It is clear that under such an administration at the Admiralty, no officer, whether on active service or retired, could feel his reputation to be safe. The responsibility for this state of affairs, constitutionally speaking, rests upon the First Lord of the Admiralty and by constitutional usage, upon the Cabinet of which he is a member. Part of the evidence in question appeared in the form of letters published in the Press and quoted in the House of Commons. When the incriminating letters were written, the late Lord Tweedmouth was First Lord of the Admiralty. It is doubtful whether he had any knowledge of the printing and circulating of these documents by the Admiralty.

But when two of them were published three years after they were written, responsibility belonged to Lord Tweedmouth's successor, Mr. McKenna. We have now to remark how the First Lord dealt with the scandal.

The matter was very properly made the subject of questions addressed to the First Lord in the House of Commons. In reply to written questions put by Mr. Carr-Gomm with reference to one of the documents published, Mr. McKenna stated that: "It is a perfectly proper letter. . . ."[1]

In this statement the First Lord of the Admiralty deliberately associated himself with the system of which the letter in question was a part. "It is," he says, "a perfectly proper letter." We are, then, to understand that it is perfectly proper for a junior captain to forward confidential reports upon the conduct of his superior officers, and of the Sovereign himself, direct to the Admiralty.

In that one statement, Mr. McKenna struck a deadly blow at the discipline of the Fleet, and at a stroke forfeited once for all the confidence of the entire Service.

[1] See Appendix VI.

At the same time the First Lord endeavoured to convey to the House the impression that the letters had only been printed as a matter of routine, and that their distribution was an accident. A Liberal member was put up to ask: "Whether it had not been the custom from time immemorial to reprint letters of a private nature in order that the subject-matter of these letters may be brought within the official ambit, and brought to the knowledge of officers within the department." Mr. McKenna, with the artless assumption of innocence proper to these occasions, replied that his friend was perfectly right, and "nothing more was done in this case than was quite regular." The letter, he said—referring to the second letter—"was never published and circularized in the ordinary sense of the word."

These forensic equivocations and evasions must be recorded, however disagreeable the task, because they demonstrate, as nothing else can demonstrate, the injury inflicted upon the honour and discipline of his Majesty's Service, for which no reparation has yet been made. A First Lord is not like a private individual; his actions must in one respect or

another affect a great tradition; hence the importance of episodes which, in private life, would be swiftly consigned to a contemptous oblivion.

The exact value of Mr. McKenna's assertions is sufficiently indicated—other evidence apart—by the evidence of another letter published in the Press on May 27, 1909. It proves that the letters to which Mr. McKenna referred were printed, not as a mere matter of routine but, to serve a definite purpose, and that they were deliberately circulated by the Admiralty. The document in question is officially docketed: L. 42890.50—4/06. Pk. E. and S.

It is now nearly four years (November 1907 to June 1911) since I had occasion to appeal to the Admiralty with reference to a grave instance of indiscipline, in which my authority as Commander-in-Chief and also my personal character were involved. The matter having passed out of my hands and having become known to the public at the time, the Admiralty, and the Admiralty alone, could have set it right. I have no intention of reviving things better consigned to oblivion. It is not the

conduct of officers which is in question, but the conduct of the Minister responsible to the country for the Admiralty.

So long as I was on the active list of the Navy, I was necessarily debarred from making known the facts. These were concealed from the public while false versions of what occurred were freely published. The effect upon the discipline of the Fleet was very serious. It is useless to expect that officers can maintain discipline unless they are confident that they will be supported by superior authority. It is equally futile to rely upon the control of Parliament over national affairs, if Ministers are permitted to mislead the House.

During my tenure of the command of the Channel Fleet, two incidents occurred of which highly misleading accounts appeared in the Press.

The first occurred in November, 1907. The breach of discipline was of so grave a character, and was committed in so public a manner, that it was my duty to make strong representations to the Admiralty with regard to the offender.

Those representations were so far disregarded that the officer in question was per-

mitted to retain his position, without having proffered a public apology for a public offence.

At the same time, a campaign of calumny, directed against myself, as Commander-in-Chief in Home Waters, broke out in the Press, injurious articles highly prejudicial to discipline being anonymously circulated among the officers of the Fleet.

I appealed to the Admiralty, in the interests of discipline, to take such measures to put a stop to these nefarious proceedings as I was myself debarred by the King's Regulations from adopting.

The only response of the constituted authorities to my request was a brief statement made in the House on March 9, 1908, many weeks after the event, by the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, in answer to a question. By that time the mischief was done; and the events which occurred during the interval and subsequently indicate that the action of the Admiralty had no appreciable effect.

In January, 1908, there was sent to every officer under my command in the Channel Fleet, a copy of a newspaper containing a violent attack upon myself. The personal

aspect of the matter did not interest me ; but the offence against discipline could not, in my view, be ignored. The incident was therefore reported to the Admiralty. Their Lordships, however, did not see fit to take any action.

In July, 1908, there appeared simultaneously in many newspapers articles assailing my character, and adversely criticising my conduct as an officer. The Fleet, under my command, was at that time carrying into execution manœuvres in the North Sea. On Thursday, July 9, an account of a signal said to have been made by me, was published in the Press, together with a statement to the effect that, had the signal been obeyed, a disaster comparable with the accident which befell the *Victoria* and the *Camperdown* must have occurred. The account was totally incorrect, and the comment wholly misleading. Their publication was in the highest degree prejudicial to my reputation as a seaman, and, therefore, extremely injurious to discipline.

As the Fleet was at sea when the alleged incident took place, the information published in the Press could only have been communicated by an officer in the Fleet.

On Thursday, July 24, 1908, the Fleet under my command had returned to Portland. Upon my arrival, I received a telegram from the First Lord, Mr. McKenna, asking me to call at the Admiralty upon the following day. In the course of my interview with Mr. McKenna, I showed to him the written evidence in my possession with regard to the person who had sent the account of the signal to the Press. Mr. McKenna refusing to accept the evidence, I subsequently forwarded the document officially to the Admiralty, at the same time informing their Lordships of my determination to hold a Court of Inquiry upon the matter. Upon the following day, Saturday, July 26, 1908, I discussed the case with Mr. McKenna again. To my surprise, Mr. McKenna was vehemently opposed to the holding of a Court of Inquiry.

The same evening, I wrote a letter to Mr. McKenna in which, in accordance with his urgent request, and having no personal feeling in the matter, I left the defence of my professional reputation in his hands.

I had, then, every reason to believe that the First Lord would take such action as would

restore discipline, which had been publicly outraged.

On July 30, 1908, Mr. McKenna stated in the House of Commons that the signal made by the Commander-in-Chief, Channel Fleet, was not dangerous, but that if the officer to whom the signal was made thought it to be dangerous, he was justified in disobeying it.[1]

This brief statement dealt with a part, and only a part, of the case. The accounts and comments which had appeared in the Press were thereby corrected. There remained a question intimately affecting the discipline of the Fleet. The question was, who had sent the information to the Press? Mr. McKenna had in his possession documentary evidence showing the identity of the person who, in defiance of the King's Regulations and to the common knowledge of the Fleet, sent the false information to the Press with regard to the signal said to have been made by me.

With that evidence in his possession, Mr. McKenna, on July 30, 1908, stated in the House of Commons that "he had no knowledge who sent the message, and it was impossible for him to find out."[1]

[1] See Appendix VII.

The House of Commons is customarily supposed to be able to maintain its own standard of honour. The point here to consider is what effect such a statement as that deliberately made by Mr. McKenna, had upon the discipline of the Fleet. The author of the message, as I have said, was known to the Fleet, though the proofs of his complicity then in Mr. McKenna's possession, were, of course, kept secret. Officers and men drew their own conclusions. They assumed that insubordination and breach of the King's Regulations were condoned by the constituted authorities.

It is of the first importance to-day that the discipline of the Fleet should be restored. Those who are responsible for the existing conditions, must be dealt with by the proper tribunal, which is Parliament. So long as Parliament continues to neglect its plain duty, so long will the evil continue, and the country will suffer the certain penalty.

It was precisely by the employment of such methods as those introduced into the Admiralty in 1906, and subsequently either approved or condoned by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, that the

authority responsible for the Navy of a neighbouring foreign Power so utterly ruined the discipline and comradeship of the Fleet that it ceased to be reckoned as a factor in international politics.

III

THE RESTORATION OF FLEET UNITS

III

THE RESTORATION OF FLEET UNITS

In December, 1904, an Admiralty memorandum, signed by Lord Selborne, was issued, setting forth a new device for saving money on the Fleet, henceforth to be known as the "scrapping" policy. It consisted in an endeavour to prove that the fewer ships a Navy contains, the stronger it is.

After describing the various classes of large armoured cruisers which, taken together, were to form a force of twenty-six such vessels during the ensuing year, the memorandum proceeded to set forth arguments.

One was that the invention of the armoured cruiser made useless the existing protected cruiser, hitherto employed in inshore squadrons, for scouting purposes with the Fleet and for peace patrol duties upon foreign stations. The armoured cruiser was thus supposed to

replace the protected cruiser, of which class of vessel it was stated no more were to be built, nor were the existing ships to be kept in repair.

The other assumption was that, as men were required for manning the nucleus crew ships in Home Ports, they could be obtained without detriment to the Service from the protected cruisers, which might then be "scrapped."

Both these assumptions have since proved erroneous. They were not accepted by foreign nations.

In March, 1909, Germany had nine more small cruisers available in home waters than Great Britain. One of the first results of the scrapping policy was, therefore, to place this country at a disadvantage with a neighbouring foreign Power in respect of a most important Fleet unit.

The assumption that the large armoured cruiser was to replace the small protected cruiser was utterly disproved in practice. In 1904, when the statement was published that small cruisers were no longer required, there were twelve such vessels in full commission in home waters and in the Mediterranean;

whereas five years later, in March, 1909, there were fifteen such vessels, the authorities having been compelled to bring back some of the vessels struck off the list. Nor can it be contended that, under these conditions, the scrapping policy did not in effect weaken the Fleet. Although there was even in 1904 a considerable deficiency in small cruisers both for Fleet work and for patrol duties on foreign stations, the scrapping policy abolished whole squadrons of these craft, which are now being replaced—but too slowly—at a vast expense to the nation.

The truth is that, in 1904, the development of the small cruiser had not kept pace with the development of the large cruiser, especially in the matter of speed. Owing to confusion of thought, or to sheer ignorance of the use of small cruisers in war, or to both causes, it was argued that the duties of small cruisers could be executed by ships of 12,000 tons and upwards, merely because these vessels could steam at high speed. Such considerations as the necessity for protecting trade, for encountering torpedo attack in advance, for dispersing force in scouting, for subsidiary

Fleet work involving absence from the main body, for navigation in shallow waters: all these practical needs were wholly ignored. Such are some of the results of the lack of a proper War Staff at the Admiralty.

It is contrary to common sense and practical experience to suppose that British naval power should be organized only for purposes of battle. The British Fleet heretofore carried the British Flag and the British ideas of justice and good government to every corner of the globe, and the service rendered to the peace of the world by the British Navy is not to be reckoned in first class battleships, armoured cruisers and torpedo craft alone. Similar vessels, but less powerful, are still needed in all parts of the world for the training of officers and men, and for the vindication of the laws of civilization whether against slave trading, gun-running, or any other breach of the peace, for kindly and often necessary ministration of charity and consolation as well as for the courtesy and compliment which form no inconsiderable part of the complex duties of the British Fleet.

The large armoured cruiser is useless for these purposes. Events have proved the

absurdity of the theory which led to the construction of the *Minotaur* and *Indomitable* classes, to the neglect of the smaller classes of cruisers, involving the country in an immense waste of money, while depriving it in a large measure of security.

It is true that in building these immense cruisers, our example has been followed by other nations, including Germany, which recognizes the necessity of possessing modern vessels of all the types owned by a potential opponent. But Germany (for instance) has not at the same time neglected to develop the smaller classes of cruisers.

With regard to the second assumption, that cruisers could safely be withdrawn from foreign stations and the men might be taken out of them to replenish the nucleus crews of the Reserve without detriment to the Service, it is to be noted that the intention was that the duties of trade protection and of attention to British interests in various parts of the world should be executed by squadrons of large armoured cruisers, making long cruises in company. In point of fact, the thing is impossible.

The futility of the theory needs no demonstration to the naval officer. Ships intended for the protection of trade on the outbreak of war must be on their station in time of peace. They are the officers on the spot, and these alone, who, knowing local conditions and affairs, can take the right action at the right moment. A captain of a gunboat who is thoroughly acquainted with local affairs is of more value to the place in question and to the Admiralty than a whole squadron of armoured cruisers paying a flying visit.

A consideration of an equal importance is the fact, well understood by naval officers, that the peace patrol of the Royal Navy, conducted by small vessels, provides the finest possible school of training in responsibility for the whole of their crews, from the commanding officer downwards. In a small ship a commander or a lieutenant becomes accustomed to the responsibility of commanding his own ship on detached service, of communicating with high officials with regard to matters of importance, and of acting upon his own initiative in emergencies. It is impossible to overestimate the value of such experience in the

formation of self-reliant and independent-minded captains and flag-officers, nor can such experience be obtained by any other means. The effect on the men is not less salutary. In a small craft ordinary seamen often do the work of able seamen, and able seamen often do the work of petty officers. There are no superfluous hands, and the absence of a very few men is severely felt.

The principles of sea-power do not change. It is one of those principles that the defence and patrol of the Empire require a large force of comparatively small vessels. Nothing can alter that necessity. In 1904, it was recklessly ignored. The power of the Fleet was gravely weakened.

The real reason for this action on the part of the Admiralty was to save money. In 1904, there were needed, for the future requirements of the Fleet, from 8,000 to 10,000 more men. These were secretly struck off the list of requirements without reference to Parliament.

The Admiralty were then confronted by a dilemma. It was impossible even to provide nucleus crews for all the second and third class cruisers in the reserve, and to keep these

vessels in repair, without asking Parliament for more money. The Admiralty therefore decided to abolish the ships in question.

It was announced that 155 ships were to be struck off the list. The statement was deliberately misleading. Out of that number, twenty-six vessels were already on the "subsidiary list"—the category of ships no longer useful—and twenty-seven vessels were harbour ships and hulks. What the Admiralty really did was to add 102 ships to the subsidiary list. Of these eighty were useful second and third class cruisers and torpedo-gunboats, upon several of which large sums of money had recently been expended.

The true statement therefore stands as follows:—

Total of ships already on Subsidiary List on October 1st, 1904	26
Total of ships added to Subsidiary List by the "scrapping" policy . . .	102
Total of harbour ships, hulks, etc., struck off . . .	27
Grand total . .	155

The public, by means of the methods introduced into the Admiralty in 1904, were led to believe that a much greater saving had been effected than was actually the case, fifty-three ships out of 155 being in point of fact practically condemned already in the natural course of elimination. The real saving was in illegitimate economy, which has since been costing the nation millions to make up, while dangerously weakening the security of the Empire. Subsequently, during the next five years, seven of the condemned vessels were secretly brought back into service, involving a heavy expenditure on repairs.

In 1909, when the "scrapping" policy was reversed, and the construction of small cruisers was tardily recommenced, the total of these vessels in commission and reserve in Home Waters had been reduced from forty-five to thirty. During the same period Germany had increased the number of her ships of a similar class from twenty-three to forty.

In the meantime, the trade routes had been left with a seriously diminished protection, which remains very dangerously inadequate to-day.

It is as necessary to scrap obsolete vessels as it is to scrap obsolete tools and machinery in an industrial concern; but in the case of the industrial business a newer and better plant is installed. In the case of the Navy, the protection on the spot against a sudden, secretly organised attack on our trade routes has been removed, and nothing has been substituted. The Admiralty Memorandum in Sir Ian Hamilton's book, "Compulsory Service," begins by stating that "our really serious danger" is the unprotected trade routes, but by some fatality of unreason provides no protection for the danger indicated.

The true explanation of the whole deplorable business is the desire to save money on men and officers, by keeping the *personnel* within certain limits.

Given a certain number of men, there can only be a certain number of ships. But the public demand ships, as concrete objects which they can understand. They do not demand men and officers. Therefore, it was decided to effect illegitimate and contemptible economies in the very life of the Fleet, by systematic undermanning. His Majesty's ships have been

undermanned for years. But the most disastrous act of all was to cancel the provision of men for the future requirements of the Fleet, and then to throw away whole squadrons of valuable ships.

Let the public fix their attention on the men: on the training of officers, the welfare of the men; and the "ironmongery" will follow in due course. Let the public take warning by the "scrapping" policy, when the ships were reduced in order to save on the *personnel.*

The link between the "scrapping" policy and the further reduction of the Fleet, still with the object of saving money on the *personnel,* is the paying off into the nucleus crew reserve of seven battleships and four armoured cruisers, which occurred in 1906. The effect, as will be shown, was to substitute a reserve for part of the Active Fleet, for which a sufficient number of men could not be provided.

IV

SHIPS WITHOUT DOCKS

IV

SHIPS WITHOUT DOCKS

In July, 1906, as I have said, the situation with regard to naval affairs was that the Admiralty, having been informed of the fact that Germany was enormously increasing her shipbuilding resources, and having previously abolished eighty valuable ships, declined to extend the British shipbuilding capacity, neglected to lay down new cruisers in place of those struck off the active list, and reduced the shipbuilding programme from four heavy armoured ships to three.

But these vessels were to be of the *Dreadnought* type, which is of so great a size that, with the exception of the new docks at Devonport, there were no docks which could accommodate the new ships. Now it is as wise to build ships without providing docks for them as it would be to build a locomotive engine without providing tools for cleaning

and repairing purposes. But in the case of the locomotive, the necessary equipment of tools can be quickly made, whereas docks take longer to build than a ship. Furthermore, what is not generally understood by the public is that docking accommodation is more important to the Fleet in respect of the periodical cleaning of ships, than in respect of repairs. A foul bottom retards the speed of the vessel and involves increased coal consumption. In other words, docks are more necessary before an action than after it.

For some years before the advent to power in 1906 of a Liberal Government "pledged to economy," the necessity of a naval base on the East coast had been recognized by the Unionist administration. Although there had been procrastination and delay, the Unionist Government, before their retirement, had actually made all arrangements to begin the construction of the naval base at Rosyth.

One of the first acts of the Liberal Government was to postpone the work. The Admiralty in this matter as in others was in collusion with the Government. On July 2, 1909, there was published in the Press an Admiralty

document, of which twenty-five copies were printed, in which were described various economies effected, at the request of the Government, among them being an item of £7,000,000 allocated for the construction of Rosyth.

Had a War Staff existed at the Admiralty, it is permissible to believe that such a betrayal of the public trust would not have occurred. In Germany, the Admiral Staff arranged that the construction of docks for the new heavy armoured ships should proceed concurrently with the building of those vessels.

Under pressure of public opinion the authorities were compelled to begin work at Rosyth, the cost of their procrastination being not only represented by inefficiency in the docking accommodation affecting the seaworthiness of the battle fleet, but by the increased price of the work, and the bonus offered to the contractor for its acceleration.

In July, 1909, I included in my proposed shipbuilding programme four floating docks to be provided at once. The Admiralty have since provided two. It should be clearly understood that the construction of floating docks was advocated instead of graving docks to

meet an emergency. Floating docks can be built quicker and at a smaller cost than graving docks, but they cannot serve the same purposes as graving docks, and can only be regarded as temporary substitutes.

Had the development of the Fleet been conceived and carried into execution upon a logical and a comprehensive scheme, including the provision of docks, stores, smaller fleet units and men, the country would have been saved the expense of the floating docks. The Fleet would also, in so far as material is concerned, have been organised for war, instead of being left to take its chance in case of emergency.

The reconstruction of Portsmouth Dockyard, which has long been unfit for modern requirements, has recently been begun, some years too late. To carry into execution a complete scheme is estimated to cost some eight million, of which only a small proportion is yet provided.

The scheme presented not long ago by the shipbuilders and civic authorities of Newcastle and the Tyne for the construction of a naval base at Jarrow Slake, adjacent to the great

private shipbuilding yards, has been rejected by the Admiralty.

My own suggestions for the construction of a repairing base at Immingham on the Humber have also been rejected.

There is to-day no Government dock, and only one private dock on the East coast in which a heavy armoured ship of the *Dreadnought* type can be accommodated, although there are thirty-one such ships built, building and projected (July, 1911).

In the event of an emergency, this condition of things must result in grave loss. In any event, the country will sooner or later be compelled to pay immense sums for the tardy fulfilment of deferred obligations.

Those who are unable to understand why the Navy Estimates have been increased, or why the increase should continue, may be recommended to study, among other aspects of naval administration, the question of dock accommodation.

V

THE DELUSION OF THE DREADNOUGHT POLICY

V

THE DELUSION OF THE DREADNOUGHT POLICY

For the sake of clearness, I recapitulate the main aspects of naval affairs in July, 1906, a date which marks the beginning of disorganization as distinct from other "economies." The Fleet had been deprived of several squadrons of cruisers, the supply of gun-mountings was restricted to a monopoly by the Admiralty,[1] the shipbuilding programme had been reduced, and the construction of an East Coast base postponed in order, according to an Admiralty memorandum, to save £7,000,000.

In each of these respects, the country has since been compelled to pay vast sums for the reversal of the policy, and the expense must continue to increase. It is always more expensive to make mistakes and then to repair them, than to pursue a settled plan. The Admiralty are now trying partially to

[1] See Appendix VIII.

remedy errors ; but, so far as can be discovered, they have devised no definite plan of operations. No such plan can be devised until a War Staff is created at the Admiralty.

In 1906, what has since (most unfortunately) been known as the *Dreadnought* policy, was introduced to the public by means of an organized system of advertisement in the Press. The public were told that in the *Dreadnought*, a vessel had been designed which could sink any other two—or more, sometimes a fleet—of warships afloat ; that she was the greatest triumph of shipbuilding skill known to history ; that beside her, all other battleships were to be regarded as "obsolete," or at least as "obsolescent." These eulogies were inspired by the Admiralty, and the Press naturally believed what it was told by authority.

When the *Dreadnought* was launched the public were further informed that her construction had occupied the shortest time on record. The basis of comparison as regards other battleships was, however, vitiated by the fact that the time of construction was dated from the laying down of the *Dreadnought* to

her launch. But between the date when the order was given for the material, and the laying of the keel-plate, months were occupied in manufacturing the material and in bringing it to the building slip. The time thus expended was not reckoned in the comparison. Furthermore, the gun-mountings of two most valuable ships then under construction, the *Lord Nelson* and the *Agamemnon*, were taken for the *Dreadnought*, so that the completion of the vessels for which they were intended was delayed for nearly two years. By means of taking gun-mountings from other ships, of collecting material ready to fix in place, of postponing the official date of commencement until as much material is collected as the adjoining ground will hold, and of working overtime, it is very easy to show that a ship is built in a shorter time than her predecessors.

No doubt the speed with which the *Dreadnought* was built was a creditable achievement. But to serve their own ends, the Admiralty, supported by a deluded Press, chose to pretend that the achievement was much greater than in reality it was.

The effect of the blaze of advertisement was

both to blind the public to the facts of the case, and to distract their attention from other, less obvious but more important, aspects of naval affairs. The public were, and are, hypnotized by the *Dreadnought* policy.

What was the *Dreadnought*?

She represented a development in shipbuilding nearly analogous to the development represented by the superiority of the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* class of battleship over the *King Edward VII.* class. Yet the *Lord Nelson* class enjoyed no advertisement.

The *Dreadnought* embodied the new idea called the "all-big-gun" theory. The secondary armament of 6-inch guns was omitted, and ten 12-inch guns were provided. In addition there were twenty-four 12-pounder guns, described by the Admiralty (Cd. 3048) as "for use against torpedo-craft." But it is problematical whether a 12-pounder shell would stop a destroyer.[1] The superior speed of the *Dreadnought* was

[1] No guns, heavy or light, will protect a battle fleet from torpedo attack by night. The only effective method of protection is to employ a large number of small cruisers to clear a wide area about the battle fleet at sundown. These cruisers do not exist in the requisite numbers.

stated to give "the power of choosing the range." These are technical matters, upon which there was, and is, considerable variation of opinion in the Service.

They are mentioned in order to show that the excessive and vulgar advertisement lavished upon this experimental vessel was by no means justified.

But the effect of that advertisement, for which the Admiralty were responsible, not only led the British public into a delusion, from which they are still suffering, but created a natural irritation among foreign Powers.

In 1906 the tradition of dignity and courtesy hitherto prevailing in the Service was rudely violated, and Great Britain proclaimed herself the Bully of the Seas.

The British traditional policy was reversed in another respect. Hitherto it had been our practice to keep so powerful a margin of strength in ships that we could afford to await the result of the experiments of other Powers. In due time, when it became clear what our requirements with regard to other Powers were, we proceeded to fulfil them.

In building the *Dreadnought* we boasted—

the Admiralty boasted—that we led the world. It was constantly stated that the launching of the *Dreadnought* had "paralysed" foreign Powers.

Both these statements were false. Every great naval Power was already working on the problem, of which the *Dreadnought* was declared to be the final solution. In due time it appeared that the new Japanese, American and German battleships were actually superior to the *Dreadnought* in fighting power.

All that the British Admiralty had accomplished was to publish a new design just in time to enable other nations to profit by its defects.

These circumstances are recalled, disagreeable and humiliating as they are, because today,[1] when we have thirty-one *Dreadnoughts* built and building, the British public still regard the whole Navy as consisting of *Dreadnoughts*.

To the building of these great ships, necessary as it has become, has been sacrificed every other naval requirement; men, small cruisers, destroyers, docks, and stores. Without an

[1] July, 1911.

adequate provision of these essentials, the battle fleet is useless for fighting purposes, and the money spent on it is a present to the future enemy. But the Admiralty succeeded in concentrating the public attention upon battleships called *Dreadnoughts*. That is the delusion of the *Dreadnought* policy. Other essentials do not show. Their need is known only to naval officers. The public, naturally enough, know nothing of them. They trust the Admiralty to provide what is necessary.

The Admiralty have betrayed their trust.

VI

THE FRAUD ON THE PUBLIC

VI

THE FRAUD ON THE PUBLIC

In July, 1906, I was offered the command of the Channel Fleet.

The composition of the Channel Fleet was then as follows :—

16 Battleships.
6 Armoured Cruisers.
3 Unarmoured Cruisers.
5 Attached ships.
36 Torpedo boat destroyers.

Total 66 vessels.

These circumstances are mentioned in detail, because they are essential to the right understanding of the sequel, in which the gravest national interests were involved, and in which disaster was only averted by the standing luck of the British Empire.

The command of the Channel Fleet was

accepted by me on August 7. On August 18, the Commanders-in-Chief were informed confidentially of certain reductions which were to be made in the composition of the sea-going Fleets. These arrangements were kept secret from Parliament and the country. As they were subsequently published, there is no violation of confidence in describing them.

At that time, the sea-going Fleet was composed as follows :—

Battleships.		Cruisers.	
Mediterranean	8	1st Cruiser squadron	6
Atlantic	8	2nd do.	6
Channel	16	3rd do.	6
		4th do.	4
Total	32	Total	22

The changes announced reduced this force to the following numbers :—

Battleships.		Cruisers.	
Mediterranean	6	1st Cruiser squadron	4
Atlantic	6	2nd do.	4
Channel	14	3rd do.	4
		4th do.	4
Total	26	Total	16

A variety of reasons was assigned by the Admiralty for the change, which, being confi-

dential, cannot be divulged. The loss to the public is the less, because none of the reasons adduced was the real reason.

The real reason not having been mentioned by the Admiralty, it is not confidential, and may therefore be stated. The whole object of the reductions was to save money by avoiding the necessity of increasing the *personnel* to the number required to reinforce the reserve crews, and by economizing on the maintenance of ships in full commission.

It is for precisely the same reason that, although, after the strongest representations on my part and in deference to public indignation, the policy has been in part—but only in part — reversed, the Mediterranean Fleet remains weakened and inadequate, and the whole Navy is short of men to-day, in spite of the increases in the *personnel* effected in 1910—11 and 1911—12.

Briefly stated, the effect of the reductions was as follows.

The margin of force required to maintain units at tactical strength while allowing for casualties and repairs, was abolished. In every

sea-going Fleet there occur unforeseen contingencies which may at any moment disable a number of ships. In the summer of 1906, six out of the eight battleships under my command were at one time unable to proceed to sea, and in the case of four of those ships, the defects could neither have been foreseen nor prevented. The remaining two vessels were refitting. The fewer the ships in a squadron, the greater the deficiency in case of loss.

The reduction of the squadrons below the required tactical strength gravely impaired the conditions under which the proper training of officers is alone possible. Even with the force under my command in the Mediterranean, the number of vessels was insufficient to provide that adequate training which is the most essential element in the fighting power of a Fleet. Under the conditions resulting from the reductions of 1906—7, proper strategical and tactical exercises became impossible.

The cruiser work, in particular, could not be adequately practised with the small number of vessels under my command, so that, in Fleet training, battleships must frequently be used to represent cruisers, the battle squadron

being represented by one ship. Under the new scheme, the number of cruisers was reduced by one-third.

These observations represented then, and represent now, the opinion of the Service. The justice of that opinion has forced the Admiralty partially to repair a fatal error. But until a War Staff is constituted at the Admiralty, there can be no security either that former mistakes will be completely rectified, or that new blunders will not be committed.

The ships removed from active service were to be placed in the reserve.

The orders were issued by the Admiralty in August, 1906. They remained unknown to the public until October 15, when the intelligence of the intended reductions was published in the Press. Public indignation was at once aroused and found vigorous expression. The sequence of events is highly significant. Eight days later, the Admiralty issued a memorandum, which was published in the Press on the following day, October 24. The silence of the Admiralty during the eight days' interval was perhaps due to the absence from England of

the First Sea Lord. The memorandum was promulgated to the officers of the Fleet in the form of a Minute.

The object of the memorandum was to prove that the Reserve Fleet was not a Reserve Fleet, and therefore that the reduction of the Active Fleet was a mere transference of vessels from one fighting fleet to another.

It was stated that the Reserve Fleet was henceforth to be known as the "Home Fleet"; that it was to be placed under the supreme command of a Commander-in-Chief at Sheerness, whose "functions will not interfere" with the Commander-in-Chief already at the Nore; that the Fleet would be "organized with a view to enhancing its value as a fighting force"; and that "the primary object aimed at will be sea-going efficiency." It was stated, further, that "a sliding scale" would be adopted in the strength of nucleus crews; and that any vessel requiring a refit in the Active Fleets would be replaced by a ship from the Home Fleet.

With the exception of the change of name, none of these conditions was fulfilled.

But the memorandum served its purpose.

It was acclaimed by the Press, which, misinformed by the authorities, had little choice but to believe what it was told, and the public were once more deceived into a false security.

It will be observed that, until the news of the reductions in the sea-going squadrons was prematurely and unexpectedly published in the Press, there had been no suggestion of a "Home Fleet."

I said privately at the time, and I say publicly now, that the Home Fleet was a fraud on the public and a danger to the State.

During the two years which elapsed before the fraud was finally abandoned, so grave was the disorganization, demoralisation and confusion, that, had this country been suddenly attacked, the Navy, in my opinion, would have suffered an initial reverse, if not a crushing defeat.

Had there been a War Staff at the Admiralty, such a condition of affairs could not have occurred. As we are still without a War Staff, it may occur again.

When I accepted the command of the Channel Fleet, and while I was still in

command of the Mediterranean Fleet, the intention of the Admiralty to reduce the sea-going Fleets had not been promulgated. The Channel Fleet, being then complete in all units, consisted of sixty-six vessels. But when the reductions took effect, the Channel Fleet was decreased to a mutilated squadron of twenty-one vessels.

Having regard to the extraordinary changes in the organization and distribution of the Fleet and the reduction of the Channel Fleet, I considered it to be my duty to lay my views of the matter before the First Lord of the Admiralty, the late Lord Tweedmouth. In an unofficial communication, under date January 22, 1907, it was pointed out to the First Lord the difference between the Channel Fleet in 1906 and the Channel Fleet in 1907. It was further represented to the First Lord that the Commander-in-Chief was to be entrusted with the control of the protection of the whole of the home waters; but that it would not be practicable for him to make efficient the whole of the Fleets in home waters (including the Home Fleet) unless the orders for the organization for war and the orders for the organization

for training for war of the torpedo craft were entirely under his control.

The First Lord was reminded that the orders were apparently to the effect that there must be two Commanders-in-Chief in home waters, and it was stated that this arrangement would be "absolutely impossible in peace and fatal in war. There can be only one Commander-in-Chief in either question, when Fleets meet. Two Commanders-in-Chief to be partners in administration, and who arrange between them the details of organization for war, would be similar to having two coachmen on the box of one coach, each handling a rein."

Among the military maxims of the First Napoleon occurs the following pertinent observation :—" The first security for success is to confer the command on one individual. When the authority is divided, opinions are divided likewise, and the operations are deprived of that *ensemble* which is the first essential to victory."

It was also pointed out to the First Lord that the Home Fleet, which was and yet was not under the command of the Commander-in-

Chief, consisted of 244 vessels, of which forty-one had been transferred from the Channel Fleet as it was in 1906; that the Commander-in-Chief had not been informed of the change; and that although he was made responsible for the whole defence of home waters, he had never been officially informed that the Home Fleet was to come under his command in war. The First Lord was therefore asked that the Board of Admiralty should signify definitely what would be the orders of the Commander-in-Chief in war.

Many an officer, before and since, has been forced into the position of being compelled to choose between doing his duty to the Service and the country, and of offending the authorities. As the result of the system of misrule, of which the circumstances connected with the Channel Fleet command are an example, many an officer, senior and junior, is suffering to-day.

The duty of an officer in such circumstances is clearly defined by Napoleon. "Every general," wrote the Emperor, "is culpable who undertakes the execution of a plan which he considers faulty. *It is his duty to represent*

his reasons, to insist upon a change of plan ; in short, to give in his resignation rather than allow himself to become the instrument of his army's ruin."

No reply was received to the letter addressed to the First Lord ; but I was asked to call at the Admiralty to see Lord Tweedmouth and the First Sea Lord.

The result of that interview is contained in a memorandum which is in my possession. It is an historic document, representing what was perhaps an unique occasion in the annals of the British Navy ; when a Commander-in-Chief, before he could, with justice to the Service and the country, assume the responsibilities of the defence of home waters, was compelled to bargain with the First Lord and the First Sea Lord in order to obtain the barest conditions under which the fulfilment of his duty was possible. The memorandum necessarily refers to technical matters ; but the point at issue was simply the absolute necessity of practising Fleet Training, without which the most capable admiral and the most efficient ships must be defeated in war.

Under the conditions laid down in the

memorandum, the whole of the ships in home waters were to be placed under my command for purposes of training. This was the one essential point upon which I felt bound to insist in assuming the responsibility of defence in home waters.

But the Admiralty did not, in the event, see fit to entrust me with the training of the 244 vessels of the Home Fleet under my command. Upon one occasion, and one only, was I given fifty ships (out of 244) for training purposes. For the rest, the organization, as it was pointed out to the First Lord, was radically defective. The Fleets in home waters were under the command of three separate Commanders-in-Chief. The Admiral (D), or Admiral commanding the Destroyers, was a fourth officer who was now under the orders of one Commander-in-Chief and again under the orders of another. If my representations were mistaken, how is it, I may ask, that when I was ordered to haul down my flag, the Admiralty immediately reverted to the system in force before I took command, and formed one large active fleet placed under one Commander-in-Chief in home waters, once

more relegating the nucleus crew ships to their proper position in the Reserve ?

It should be pointed out that at this time under the new distribution of the Fleet, unless the whole number of fourteen battleships of the Channel Fleet were available—that is, not in dockyard hands under repair, and having no breakdowns or defects—the German manœuvring squadron, provided that it was intact, was actually superior to the British Channel Fleet.

I repeat, that had there been a War Staff at the Admiralty, such a condition of affairs could not have occurred, and that until a proper War Staff is constituted, the same conditions may occur again.[1]

[1] See p. 95, postscript.

VII

ORGANIZATION FOR WAR

VII

ORGANIZATION FOR WAR

In response to representations, the Admiralty granted certain conditions precedent to the hoisting of my flag as Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet early in 1907. It may here be noted that the said conditions were not observed by the Admiralty.

Nothing could more poignantly demonstrate the need for a War Staff at the Admiralty than the state of affairs at the time. As we are still without a War Staff, it is worth while recalling the circumstances.

Abroad, the foreign stations and the trade routes had been deprived by the scrapping policy of a number of war vessels; the naval bases and coaling stations in the West Indies, the Falkland Islands, Esquimalt and Trincomalee had been dismantled, partially abandoned, and the stores sold. At home, the *personnel* of the Navy had been reduced by 3,000 men; the number of men in the

Royal Dockyards had fallen from 35,340 in 1904 to 27,315; and forty-one coastguard stations had been closed. There was (and is) no Government dock on the east coast capable of accommodating a *Dreadnought*. As regards naval construction, the programme for the current year again showed a reduction in heavy armoured ships. The building of small cruisers and destroyers was gravely in arrear. The short service system had been introduced into the Fleet, thereby creating a source of serious weakness.

The results of that policy are still evident. The cruiser force has not been replaced upon foreign stations; the protection of trade routes is still dangerously inadequate; the foreign stations have not been restored; graving docks have not yet been provided on the East Coast; and the short service system is still in force. None of these deficiencies can be remedied on the outbreak of war by improvised means. Much time, labour, and money, for instance, must be expended upon the restoration of the naval bases abroad; for the existing machinery has been allowed to rot, and the stores have been sold.

The ships in home waters were distributed among three Fleets: the Channel, Atlantic and Home Fleets. Each of these was stationed at a different place under a separate command. Of these, the Home Fleet, really a Reserve Fleet manned by nucleus crews, and used for the training of young seamen and stokers, was declared by the Admiralty to be "instantly ready for war." All three Fleets were to be placed under my command in war; but in peace, they could only be placed under my command for training purposes at such times as the Admiralty thought proper to arrange. The Admiralty did not think proper to combine the fleets for training purposes, except upon one occasion (October, 1907), when I manœuvred fifty vessels from the Home Fleet out of 244.

In these circumstances, it was my first duty to organize the Fleet for war. That is the business of a Commander-in-Chief.

In order to organize a Fleet for war, it is first of all necessary to devise a plan. That plan must be arranged in accordance with the policy of his Majesty's Government. The Government having acquainted the Admiralty

with their policy, it becomes the duty of the Admiralty to state what force is required to carry that policy into execution, and, having obtained such force, to organize it upon a definite plan. The reason why a war plan is necessary beforehand is that upon the outbreak of war there is no time to make one.

Whether the Admiralty—in the absence of a War Staff—should make the plan, or the Commander-in-Chief, is a matter, at present, of arrangement. With a properly constituted War Staff, the question could not arise. The essential point is, that there should be a plan.

During the whole tenure of my command in home waters, I was in constant correspondence with the Admiralty on the subject of a plan. That correspondence is necessarily confidential.

I must therefore confine myself to the statement that, assuming an adequate war plan to have been in existence, the vessels required in order to carry it into execution were not available.

The position of Commander-in-Chief in home waters was of singular difficulty and

extremely harassing in consequence. If, on the one hand, he continued to represent the dangers of the existing state of affairs to the constituted authority, he incurred the risk of their displeasure; and if, on the other hand, he accepted the situation in silence, he was abusing the confidence of the country and acquiescing in a danger to the national security.

Under these circumstances, I considered that the maxim of the First Napoleon, which I have already quoted in another connection, was a safe guide. "Every general is culpable who undertakes the execution of a plan which he considers faulty. It is his duty to represent his reasons, to insist upon a change of plan; in short, to give in his resignation rather than allow himself to become the instrument of his army's ruin."

Accordingly, I continued to make representations to the Admiralty. I repeat, that had there been a properly constituted War Staff at the Admiralty, whose institution I have been urging for the last thirty years, so invidious a situation could not have arisen; and I also repeat that, until such a War

Staff is established, the same situation, fraught with untold danger to the Empire, may recur; and indeed, in so far as the Admiralty Memorandum (Cd. 5539) dealing with invasion affords any indication, the same condition of affairs prevails to-day.

The business of the Navy is to fight. In order to be able to fight with a reasonable prospect of success, the Fleet must be organized for war during peace. Naval warfare of to-day is an affair, not of single ships but, of fleets. Fleets must be constantly trained to act in concert; the units of the Fleet must be constantly trained to act with the Fleet; and, in addition, training must be given to squadrons and single ships acting in conjunction with their independent initiative.

To conduct training for war is the duty of the Commander-in-Chief. In order to perform it, he must, as I have said, proceed in accordance with a definite plan. The designing of a plan involves the sciences of strategy and of tactics, with which I have not here to do.

But as a Fleet consists of a large number of vessels of various classes, it is necessary that

the Commander-in-Chief should always know at any given moment where each ship is stationed, what is her condition, and what is her rate of speed. If he is ignorant of these facts, he cannot tell what ships he has available; and if he cannot tell what ships he has available, he is necessarily unable either to carry any plan into execution, or to conduct the training of the Fleet. It is, therefore, essential that the whole of the Fleet upon a station should be placed under one command, and that the whole of the War Fleet—as distinguished from the Reserve Fleet—should be in one place.

Having regard to these considerations, it now becomes clear why, when the Fleet in home waters was split into several independent commands and distributed among several ports, organization for war, which includes readiness to carry into execution a plan, and the training of the Fleet, was impossible.

As Commander-in-Chief of the home waters, the only Fleet of whose ships, their position, their condition, and their speed, I had accurate information was the Channel

Fleet, numbering twenty-one vessels. With regard to the ships of the Home Fleet and the Atlantic Fleet, their position, condition and speed, there was no means of obtaining periodical and accurate information. There were 244 vessels in the Home Fleet and thirteen vessels in the Atlantic Fleet. All these, in addition to the Channel Fleet, were to be placed under my command upon the outbreak of war. There were thus 257 vessels of whose position, condition and speed the Commander-in-Chief in war was kept in ignorance.

In addition, the small force of twenty-one vessels which was immediately under my command, was constantly being reduced by the removal of ships for refit, repairs and other purposes. The Channel Fleet was the only force in home waters ready for immediate action. Upon one occasion, six battleships and one armoured cruiser were under repair at one time. Contrary to the terms of the Admiralty minute of October 23, 1906, these ships were not replaced by ships from the Home Fleet. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, stated in the House on November 12, 1908, that these

seven ships were withdrawn upon my recommendation. The statement was totally incorrect. The responsibility belonged to the Admiralty and to the Admiralty alone.

Upon another occasion, the total strength of the Channel Fleet consisted of thirteen battleships and three unarmoured cruisers.

In July, 1907, the Admiralty, in response to my repeated representation, restored to the Channel Fleet its complementary units, of which it had been deprived before I took over the command, and brought the Fleet to what was approximately its former strength.

I should add that some of the more notorious facts of the case having been made known by the Press, much public indignation was aroused, and vigorous protests were uttered in the House of Commons.

But during the whole tenure of my command in home waters, the Fleet was not, and could not be, organized for war.

It was officially stated in the House and by that part of the Press which was inspired by the Admiralty, that during this period the Home Fleet was in "a state of development."

The facts were, of course, that the distribution of the Fleet had been suddenly changed in order to effect economies; that in order to disguise this intention the Reserve Fleet was represented as an Active Fleet; and that the system of commands and the distribution of ships was so devised as to make war organization impossible.

When the pretence was exposed, the distribution of the Fleet and the system of commands was reversed to what it was before the changes were made.

The results of my representations were two. The false policy was eventually in part reversed; and I was ordered to haul down my flag a year before the expiration of my tenure of command, an incident without parallel in the history of the Royal Navy. It was, therefore, after my departure that the single large War Fleet maintained in active service and supported by a reserve was reconstituted; the justice of my contention was proved; and another Admiral was sacrificed to save the face of the powers that be.

But the policy was reversed, not by the disposition of a War Staff at the Admiralty

but, upon the representations of one officer. As there is still no War Staff, what security has the country that an equally fatal series of mistakes will not be committed, or what prospect that next time we shall escape the penalty?

Postscript.

As I am passing these pages for press, a flagrant instance of the lack of organization for war occurs at a time when hostilities might break out at any moment between Germany and this country. Owing either to ignorance or (let us hope) to patriotism, the state of things passed almost wholly unnoticed by the newspapers. Although critical relations had existed for some weeks when the Prime Minister made his important announcement dealing with international affairs, the Admiralty were apparently quite unconscious that alike in disposition and subsidiary arrangements, the Fleet was unprepared for an emergency. So grave was the situation that on July 27th I felt it to be my duty to indicate the facts of the case to the Prime Minister in a letter

which is printed in the appendix,[1] and to which Mr. Asquith returned a courteous reply, marked private.

[1] See Appendix XII.

VIII

THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

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The correspondence between myself and the Board of Admiralty relative to the question of organization for war began when I assumed the command in home waters, and was continued until December, 1908. On the 19th of that month, I received an intimation from the First Lord, that he had reduced the term of my command from three years to two years. On the 24th of March following, I was ordered to haul down my flag.

Having been relieved of the restrictions rightly imposed upon officers on active service, I considered what course I ought to pursue in making known the truth with regard to naval affairs, in order that the security of the country and of the Empire might be restored. It was first of all necessary that so grave a situation should not become associated with party politics. It is, perhaps, worth while at

this point to observe that there are few uglier qualities of partisan politics than the eagerness of one side to accuse their opponents, whenever they criticize the conduct of naval affairs, of being inspired by the vulgar desire to score a point in the party game. For if the party which happens to be in power deserves criticism, it is the simple duty of the Opposition to criticize them ; and when the Government and their supporters cast aspersions upon the motives of their political opponents, their action is far from honourable. Its effect has been to deter the Opposition from fulfilling its proper responsibility, for no one likes to be perpetually accused of foul play. There are few aspects of public life so discouraging, none which suggests so painful a doubt of the value of our system of governance, as the political situation with regard to matters of national and Imperial defence. In justice to the Unionist party, it must be said that when they are in power, the criticism of their opponents has always been directed to proving that they are providing too lavishly for the Services ; whereas, when a Liberal administration is in office, the more difficult

and ungrateful task of protesting against illegitimate economies falls upon the Unionists, who are accused of party spirit into the bargain.

In view of this unhappy posture of affairs, what is a naval officer—whose politics, as Lord Collingwood said, are the politics "of Old England"—to do, at a moment when he believes it to be his duty to expose the truth? I considered that, in my own case, the right course of action was to appeal directly to the constituted authorities.

I therefore wrote to the Prime Minister, under date April 2, 1909, setting forth what in my view were serious dangers to the security of the Empire. That letter was published in full in the Report (Parliamentary Return, 256) of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was appointed by the Prime Minister, to inquire into the questions of naval policy raised in the aforesaid letter.

I should not here revive the issues involved if it were not for the highly disquieting fact that the chief recommendation made by His Majesty's Ministers, in consequence of the

state of things revealed by the inquiry, has not yet been carried into effect.

That recommendation was the formation of a War Staff at the Admiralty.

The words of the Report are: "The Committee have been impressed with the differences of opinion among officers of high rank and professional attainments, regarding important principles of naval strategy and tactics, and they look forward with much confidence to the further development of a Naval War Staff, from which the Naval Members of the Board and Flag Officers and their Staffs at sea may be expected to derive common benefit."

The Report was dated August 12, 1909—two years ago. The Admiralty are still without a War Staff.

The Committee also stated in their Report, that "the First Lord of the Admiralty furnished the Committee with a résumé of the steps which have recently been taken to develop a War Staff at the Admiralty, and indicated further advances in this direction, which are in contemplation." Thus were the public led to believe that the institution of a

Naval War Staff was actually in progress. Such, however, was not the case.

What really happened was that two officers who had been summoned to give evidence before the Committee of Inquiry, were dismissed from the Admiralty, and the Divisions in which they had been respectively employed were abolished One Division was the Trade Division of the Intelligence Department, which was concerned with the inestimably important business of the protection of the Trade Routes. The other Division was the War Division of the Intelligence Department, also abolished. In its place was instituted a new Division, called the Naval Mobilization Department, to which an officer was appointed in the room of the officer dismissed. These were the changes, which were described by Mr. McKenna as the "reorganization" of the Naval Intelligence Department at the Admiralty, which was the beginning of the formation of a War Staff. These changes took place two years ago. And that is all.

There is no War Staff at the Admiralty, and there is no attempt, nor has there been

any attempt, to provide that indispensable Department.

"In connection with the question of War Plans," reported the Committee, "it should be mentioned that Lord Charles Beresford attributed many of the Admiralty's alleged shortcomings to the absence of a proper strategical department."

I did, and I do.

What were the "alleged shortcomings"? The Committee in their Report summarized them under three main headings, viz.:

Part I.—The organization and distribution of the Fleet in home waters.

Part II.—Small Craft and Destroyers.

Part III.—War Plans.

With regard to the organization and distribution of the Fleet in home waters, I stated that the requirements were: "One large homogeneous fleet, complete in all units, battleships, armoured cruisers, protected cruisers, scouts, destroyers, mine-ships, mine-clearers, and auxiliaries, trained under the orders of one Commander-in-Chief, maintained at sea, and in full commission; the administration of the various divisions being

entrusted to the Admirals in command of them."

Under the system in force during my tenure of command in home waters, not one of these conditions had been fulfilled.

What was the result? The Committee stated in the Report that since March, 1909—when I was ordered to haul down my flag—the Fleet had been completely reorganized as I suggested.

With regard to Part II., small craft and destroyers, I gave evidence before the Committee showing that the provision of these vessels was dangerously inadequate.

In their Report, the Committee denied the deficiency. But the Admiralty at once began to build both medium cruisers and destroyers, thereby reversing the policy they had followed during the previous four years. In 1906—7 there were laid down two torpedo-boat destroyers; in 1908—9 twenty-one of these craft, including three for the Dominions, were laid down. Why, if there was, as the Committee asserted, "no such deficiency as to constitute a risk to the safety of the country," have the vessels in question been built?

It is not unreasonable to conclude that my contentions were justified; and if they were justified, it follows that not nearly enough medium cruisers and destroyers have been provided, nor is there any sign that the Admiralty even now appreciate the necessities of the case.

It may be added that the facts which I laid before the Committee were the subject of repeated representations during the tenure of my command in home waters.

With regard to Part III., War Plans, the Committee denied that I had any "substantial grounds for complaint in this matter." Such is not my opinion. But it is more pertinent to note that the Committee immediately recommended the formation of a War Staff.

Until the War Staff be constituted, the reorganization of the Fleet may well prove to be the prelude to a concentrated disaster instead of a series of defeats.

Until the War Staff be constituted, there can be no assurance either that a practicable war plan is in existence, or that the right number and the right class of vessels required

to carry such plan into execution are provided. A proper strategic plan ensures that the right number of ships are at the right place at the right moment.

Judging by the latest declaration of Admiralty policy, as set forth in the Admiralty memorandum included in the second edition of Sir Ian Hamilton's work on "Compulsory Service," it would appear to be tacitly admitted that there is no practicable war plan in existence, and that if there were such a plan, neither the number nor the class of vessels required to carry it into execution, have been provided.

IX

HOW NOT TO DO IT: THE ADMIRALTY MEMORANDUM

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The fatal result of the lack of a proper War Staff at the Admiralty is remarkably and publicly exemplified in the "Notes supplied by the Admiralty for the use of the War Office in the Debate that was to have taken place in November, 1910, in the House of Lords, on a motion by Lord Roberts." (Parliamentary Paper Cd. 5539, price ½*d.*)[1] The title is an instructive piece of literature; to find fault with it would seem ungracious; and yet it might be suggested that this portentous legend is, if anything, a little verbose, and also that it fails to describe the contents of the Memorandum. Had the treatise been called "The Result of doing without a War Staff at the Admiralty," the War Office would at least have been warned of what they might expect.

[1] See Appendix IX.

But owing to the postponement of "the Debate that was to have taken place," etc., the Memorandum was in danger of being lost to the world, when it was happily decided, apparently by agreement among Lord Haldane, Mr. McKenna, and Sir Ian Hamilton, to include it as an appendix in the second edition of Sir Ian Hamilton's interesting essay in the art of military fiction called "Compulsory Service." In that volume, to the "Notes supplied," etc., are appended the initials "A.K.W.," which correspond with the initials of the present[1] First Sea Lord. But when the "Notes" were issued as a Parliamentary Paper, they appeared without the initials.

Whether or no the First Sea Lord wrote the Memorandum is immaterial to the point at issue. The sole responsibility both for its contents and for its publication now rests upon the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna. For the Memorandum was not issued to the House of Commons with the approval of the Board of Admiralty.

But it was put forward by Mr. McKenna as an Admiralty Note embodying the official view of the Board. Mr. McKenna has

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informed Parliament that if one member of the Board and himself approve of anything, such approval is the approval of the Board of Admiralty.[1] When the First Lord thus arrogated to himself the authority of the whole Board, the Sea Lords did not resign, but tacitly acquiesced in an unconstitutional innovation. It must therefore appear that the elimination of the one member of the Board, leaving the First Lord sole arbiter, presented no difficulty.

Presumably, too, Lord Haldane would not have permitted the Memorandum to appear in the appendix to a book to which the Minister for War had kindly contributed a preface, had he not believed the "Notes supplied by the Admiralty for the use of the War Office," etc., to represent officially the views of the Board.

The motion by Lord Roberts — whose arguments the Memorandum was apparently devised (through the War Office) to confute— was to the effect that the military defences of this country were dangerously inadequate. The Memorandum therefore sets forth a series of reasons why invasion is impossible under

[1] See Appendix X.

existing conditions. Such, at least, is evidently the intention of the Memorandum; but so subtly are its terms conceived that no brief description can accurately define its scope and complexity.

The Memorandum, for instance, begins by asserting that "the really serious danger that this country has to guard against in war is not invasion. . . ." It is here permissible to inquire, if there is no serious danger of invasion, for what purpose Lord Haldane established the Territorial Army? It has been officially stated that the object of a Territorial Army is to deal with "a raid"; also that it is to compel the enemy to embark so large a force that it could not possibly escape the British Navy while it was crossing the sea. The Memorandum contains no reference to a raid, but deals entirely with the imaginary large force. Napoleon once advised his Generals never to "make a picture" in their minds of what their adversary was going to do. The great soldier's own practice was to make a picture in his mind of what he himself was going to do. Mr. McKenna, however, knows better. His Memorandum depicts an

imaginary enemy doing imaginary things and deservedly suffering a fictitious defeat.

In "Fallacies and Facts, an Answer to 'Compulsory Service,'" by Field Marshal Earl Roberts, V.C., the following references are made to the Memorandum:

"It is assumed, to begin with, that we are at war with Germany alone, and that our Navy has no other problem to deal with. It is further assumed that our naval superiority over Germany in home waters must always be so great that, even if half our Fleet is decoyed away by a stratagem, the remaining half could make a certainty of crushing the whole German Navy. It is further assumed that at the time when the projected invasion is undertaken the whole German Navy, including apparently even commerce destroyers, is shut up in its ports, and that it will only come out in order to act as a passive escort to the transports carrying the invading army. It is assumed that an immense fleet of transports will be necessary . . . the Germans will require at least 200,000 tons of shipping, or three tons to a man, to carry 70,000 men across the North Sea, and will be obliged to use at least 150

vessels, that is to say, vessels of an average tonnage of little more than 1,300 tons, for the purpose; many of these vessels . . . will not steam more than ten or twelve knots. It is assumed . . . that the whole operation of getting the men on board, crossing the North Sea, disembarking, and getting ready for an advance inland would, given fair weather and no opposition afloat or ashore, take three weeks—about the time it took us to land troops at Cape Town . . . that the Germans will have neither destroyers, nor submarines, nor wireless telegraphy, while we shall have an unlimited supply of all these adjuncts of modern warfare . . . why should they [the enemy] deliberately select the conditions least favourable to themselves?"

Lord Roberts goes on to show that every one of the assumptions so lightly made is a fallacy. He deals with the question as a soldier. I propose to examine the Memorandum from the point of view of a naval officer.

The Memorandum, having affirmed that invasion is not a "really serious danger," states that what is the "really serious danger" is the "interruption of our trade and destruc-

tion of our Merchant Shipping." In other words, that the point of attack will not be these islands, but the trade routes. How does Mr. McKenna know what the point of attack will be? But assuming, for the sake of argument, his theory to be correct, let us see what the Admiralty propose to do.

"The strength of our Fleet," says the Memorandum, "is determined by what is necessary to protect our trade, and if it is sufficient for that, it will be *almost necessarily sufficient* to prevent invasion, since the same disposition of the ships *to a great extent* answers both purposes."

This is one of the most remarkable sentences, alike in its qualifications, implications, statements and syntax, ever found in a serious contribution to the study of strategy.

In the first place, the strength of the Fleet is not determined by what is necessary to protect our trade. It is determined—or should be determined—by what is necessary to defeat a given combination of hostile forces, and *also* by what is required to patrol and to protect the trade routes. Here are two distinct functions, for each of which a different class of vessel is

employed, and with regard to each of which different strategical and tactical problems are involved.

The initial assumption, then, is a fallacy. But the Memorandum goes on to assert that if the Fleet be strong enough to protect trade, "it will be *almost necessarily sufficient* to prevent invasion." What does this extraordinary collocation of words mean? If it means anything it means that the Fleet will *not* be "sufficient" to prevent invasion. A Fleet is either sufficient or it is not, just as a door must be either open or shut. "Almost necessarily sufficient" and "to a great extent" are expressions implying a margin of inferiority; and it is upon that margin—a margin of weakness — that the Admiralty rely to "prevent invasion." This is a highly consolatory doctrine. Pursued to its logical conclusion, it would prove that the weaker the Fleet, the less the chance of invasion.

Then we are told what is the "main object" of the Fleet. It used to be held that the main object of the Fleet was to seek out and to destroy the enemy wherever he was found. But, not at all. "The main object aimed at

by our Fleet, whether for the defence of commerce or for any other purpose" (rather a large expression) "is to prevent any ship of the enemy from getting to sea far enough to do any mischief before she is brought to action." Presumably the operation of blockade is here intended as a means of preventing both invasion and commerce destruction. Very well. But how will blockade avail against hostile ships already "at sea far enough" to do mischief? According to the Memorandum, the whole British Navy will only be "almost necessarily sufficient" for blockading purposes. We are then to understand that thousands of miles of trade routes will be left naked to the depredations of cruisers or armed merchantmen.

But the blockade is assumed in the Memorandum to be "almost certainly" (another margin of weakness) effective in preventing a large fleet of transports from reaching our shores. Quite so—unless they started before the blockade was established. Presumably we are to believe that the enemy would wait for that operation of war to be completed.

But the Memorandum, abandoning in the next paragraph the theory of effective blockade,

assumes that the large fleet of transports is at sea. It is then stated that the moment it was sighted intelligence of the event would be immediately transmitted to the Admiralty by wireless. The Admiralty would then issue orders by wireless to "every ship which happened to be in a position to intercept the transports" to concentrate upon them. Ships of war, it may be observed, do not "happen to be" in positions under any reasoned scheme of organization for war. They are where they are told to be. But would the enemy transports be unaccompanied by hostile warships? Apparently they are to be convoyed by the hostile Fleet, for we read further on that "the fleets would engage each other while the destroyers and submarines torpedoed the transports." What, then, would occur to the scattered miscellaneous British ships, "happening to be" in various "positions," thus disorderly hurried by wireless into the presence of a hostile fleet, armed, disposed, and prepared at every point?

The larger the mob, the greater the danger of swift demoralization. Until there is a War Staff at the Admiralty there can be no proper

organization, and so long as there is no proper organization for war, so long will the British Fleet run the hazard of being defeated by the unexpected attack of, what may be a smaller but, an organized and a trained naval force acting upon a preconcerted plan.

But the Memorandum, again abandoning its theory, assumes that a Fleet action has been avoided, and that the transports have arrived off these shores. Then, we are informed, they would "be attacked and sunk by submarines which are stationed along the coast for that purpose." It will be observed that the officer in charge of the transports is to take no measures to defend his ships. Considering that submarines are blind when they attack, it may be that the said officer's intrepid composure is justified.

Then the Memorandum discovers yet another resource in the "improbable event" of all the foregoing devices having failed. The whole destroyer force is to be called into action as a "second line of defence." Part of that force is assumed by the Memorandum to be "acting oversea," being presumably employed in blockading the enemy's coast. That assumption is again based upon a fallacy, as

there are not at this moment enough or nearly enough destroyers to work off distant hostile coasts. If by "oversea" the coasts of Germany are indicated, the existing number of destroyers available for watching is seventy-one.[1] Of these only seventeen could be actually stationed oversea. Thirty-four would be required for reliefs going or coming, seventeen would be resting, leaving three to spare. These are the only conditions under which a destroyer force can be used, because of the intense strain imposed upon officers and men. Germany has seventy-three destroyers, which would own the great advantage of being stationed at their own bases.

To confuse, as the Memorandum confuses, the whole question of tactical action "oversea," with provision against an emergency at home, without giving any details or figures or suggesting how either operation is to be carried into execution, affords another example of the cynically careless methods employed in dealing with subjects of national importance.

But at this point the Memorandum suddenly begins to form that "picture" of what the

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enemy might, could, should, or would do, against which Napoleon warned his strategists.

"To understand thoroughly the small chance of an invasion from the other side of the North Sea being successful," says the Memorandum, "it is necessary to put oneself in the place of the officer who has to undertake the responsibility of conducting it."

The officer in question is represented as meditating, hand to brow, upon the extraordinary difficulties of his task. He does not know how he can get his "great fleet" of transports to sea in secret. It does not, however, occur to him that, as Lord Roberts has pointed out, he only requires five big liners—not "a fleet." Our imaginary officer therefore sees no chance of getting his transports to sea unobserved. Next, he calculates—quite inaccurately—that Great Britain has double his own force of battleships and cruisers "besides a swarm of destroyers," and then he remembers that he does not know and cannot find out where all these hostile vessels are at the moment. Next, he perceives that his "great fleet" will cover "many square miles of water" and must carry lights, so that it

"will be visible nearly as far by night as by day." "How," according to the Memorandum, he demands of himself—"how can he hope to escape discovery?" Again, he remembers that many of his transports are slow, and must therefore be destroyed if they are "discovered." He considers that even if he is convoyed by warships, destroyers can "avoid" the warships and torpedo his transports; nor does it occur to him to use his own destroyers to defeat this manœuvre.

At this point our foreign officer has a brilliant inspiration. What if he "decoyed" away half the British Fleet? But his heart again fails him, for he calculates—again incorrectly—that the other half is quite big enough to do his business. As in a scene at a theatre, he beholds the fleets engaging each other "while the destroyers and submarines torpedoed his transports." Even if by a miracle he won the battle, he sees in the distance other submarines waiting to attack, and beyond them the coast lined with "a superior force"—number not stated—of soldiers.

Here follows the epitaph of that unhappy officer, as composed by the British Admiralty.

Taking all these facts into consideration, he would probably decide, as the Admiralty have done (*sic*), that an invasion on even the moderate scale of 70,000 men is practically impossible." It might be added that subsequently our friend—not being an Englishman —would "probably" be superseded in favour of a competent officer.

If the Memorandum is to be regarded as the official view of the Board of Admiralty, it would be interesting to learn what the War Staffs of foreign countries think of that document. If it is not the official view of the Board, how is it that the Memorandum is headed "Admiralty," and that the Sea Lords have accepted the situation?

It may be suggested that it is the publication of such papers as "The Notes Supplied by the Admiralty," etc., etc., which impresses foreign observers with the delusion that we are a nation of hypocrites. They cannot believe that we are really so simple as we seem. Our published ideas of strategy are supposed to be an attempt to mislead the foreigner: whereas they are really an endeavour to confuse our own people in order to serve the ends of party politicians.

X

THE ORIGIN OF THE SCARE OF 1909

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In March, 1909, His Majesty's Ministers, as everyone remembers, announced that they had under-estimated the shipbuilding capabilities of a neighbouring nation and over-estimated the capacities of this country. They informed Parliament of certain discoveries which sent a tremor throughout the Empire and which instantly inspired the oversea dominions to volunteer help to the United Kingdom.

On March 16, 1909, Mr. McKenna, in introducing the Navy Estimates, said : "The difficulty in which the Government finds itself placed at this moment is that we do not know, as we thought we did, the rate at which German construction is taking place. . . . Two years ago, I believe, there were in that country, with the possible exception of one or two slips in private yards, no slips capable of

carrying a *Dreadnought*. To-day they have no fewer than fourteen of such slips, and three more are under construction. What is true of the ships is also true of the guns, armour, and mountings. . . . I have given reasons for believing that the German power of constructing this particular type of ship is at this time almost if not fully equal to our own, owing to the rapid development during the last eighteen months. . . ."

Here was a sufficiently damaging confession; but Mr. McKenna carefully omitted a material part of the truth.

The Prime Minister said: "The first assumption was that the German paper programme—I think I described it as a paper programme"—he did—"was one which might not be realized, and certainly would not be exceeded. That has turned out not to be true. . . . The right hon. gentleman asks when did we know that? We knew it, or heard of it, at any rate, in the Autumn, I think in November (1908); and it was in view of that most grave, and to us not only unforeseen, but unexpected state of things, that we had to reconsider our programme of the present year."

Thus the Prime Minister, who also carefully suppressed a material part of the truth.

On March 29 following, Sir Edward Grey said: "First of all, the House and the country are perfectly right in the view that the situation is grave. A new situation in this country is created by the German programme. Whether that programme is carried out quickly or slowly the fact of its existence makes a new situation. . . . That imposes upon us the necessity, of which we are at the beginning—except in so far as we have *Dreadnoughts* already — of rebuilding the whole of our Fleet. . . . The doubtful point of the situation is our comparative capacity for the construction of gun-mountings. . . . That is the real point of urgency. . . ."

The Foreign Secretary, like the First Lord and the Prime Minister, carefully omitted from his statement a material part of the truth.

What all these Ministers omitted to state was the fact that nearly three years before these alarming speeches were delivered, and two and a half years before the Government were informed of the fact, the Admiralty had received full and detailed information from

a skilled witness of the increase in German ship-building capacity and the capacity for producing gun-mountings, which was already in progress.

The suppression of that information by the Admiralty and their refusal to act upon it, was the sole cause of the scare of 1909.

If the situation was grave, as Sir Edward Grey said it was, what was it in May, 1906, when the Admiralty received the information?

Three years later, in 1909, the situation was grave enough to excite a panic.

Had the Admiralty at once conveyed the information they received in May, 1906, to the Cabinet, it would have been easy to take the necessary action, to order the ships required, and to enlarge the capacity for manufacturing gun-mountings, by asking more private firms to work for the Admiralty and by utilizing the machinery kept idle at Woolwich, from which factory the men were discharged.

The Admiralty, however, chose to suppress their information, to reduce the shipbuilding programme, and to keep the monopoly of gun-mountings manufacture in the hands of two allied firms.

On March 16, 1909, Mr. Asquith stated that the Government first became acquainted with the news in the Autumn of 1908, or two years and six months after the Admiralty had in fact received the information. Even then, it was, not the Admiralty but, the original informant of the Admiralty, who told the Cabinet.

Why did the Admiralty suppress this extraordinarily important information?

That question has never been answered. There are other questions, not less vital to the national interest, to which answers have not yet been given. As, for instance: Did any official profit directly or indirectly by the restriction of the Government orders for gun-mountings to two firms alone?

It may be argued that, as these events occurred some time ago, and as the policy of the Admiralty has since to a certain extent been reversed, there is nothing to be gained by reviving old issues. I reply that in these acts of maladministration resides the explanation, hitherto withheld from Parliament and the country, of the vast increase of the Navy estimates for this year and last year; of the vaster obligations incurred,

which must be discharged at immense and increasing cost ; of the deficiencies in men, in officers, in small cruisers, in docking accommodation, and in stores, which to-day render the Navy inadequate in every respect, except in the matter of heavy ships. The Fleet is like an army which is all heavy artillery.

The wrong will never be righted while its causes remain concealed, and while those responsible for maladministration continue to wield authority.

An unsuccessful attempt was made by Mr. Duke, K.C., to elucidate the matter, whose details he placed before the House of Commons on March 16, 1910. Mr. Duke stated that the gentleman who first informed the Admiralty of the German extensions had since been asked to resign his position as Managing Director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, a firm whose designs for gun-mountings had hitherto been rejected by the Admiralty. Subsequently, in July, 1909, an order for the whole of the gun-mountings for a battleship was given by the Admiralty to the Coventry Ordnance Works.

In the following Autumn, Admiral Bacon,

Director of Naval Ordnance, was appointed to succeed Mr. Mulliner as Managing Director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, under an agreement for seven years, at a salary of £7,000 a year.

Mr. Duke stated that the designs for gun-mountings submitted by the Coventry Ordnance Works in 1909, and accepted by the Admiralty, were the same designs as those which were rejected by the Admiralty in 1907, when Mr. Mulliner was Managing Director of the Coventry Works, and when Admiral Bacon was Director of Naval Ordnance.

When Mr. Duke set forth the whole of the details of the case on March 16, 1910, Mr. McKenna at first declined to make any statement whatever on the ground that Mr. Duke did not say that he personally believed "in the truth of the statement he made." Mr. Duke said "the right honourable gentleman must take his own course." Mr. McKenna's final reply is worth quoting. He said :—

"The case of Mr. Mulliner was raised upon most of the Opposition platforms in the country during the last election, but now only one gentleman opposite has ventured

to get up in this House and repeat the allegations which Mr. Mulliner made, and that hon. member does not dare to get up in his place in Parliament and say that he believes in the truth of the statement. The Committee will, I hope, therefore exonerate me if I make no reply to the absolutely baseless charge of Mr. Mulliner."

The Committee let the matter pass, thereby affording another interesting example of the futility of the theory that the House of Commons exercises its office as guardian of the public interest.

The fact remains that those "Admiralty officials" whose honour was directly and publicly impugned by Mr. Mulliner made no attempt to defend themselves. If Mr. Mulliner's statements were "absolutely baseless," as Mr. McKenna declared, why did the parties implicated fail to sue him for libel?

When the facts of the case were made public in the Press, upon the platform, and in the House of Commons, it was the duty of the First Lord of the Admiralty to clear the officials in his department from the charges brought against them, if he could. If he could

not, it was his duty, as trustee of the public interest, to bring them to justice. But Mr. McKenna proved himself unable to protect either his own department or the public.

In 1906-1907, the building programme was reduced by one battleship, in 1907-1908 by one battleship, in 1908-1909 by two battleships—four in all.

In 1906, Germany, by a significant coincidence, added six large armoured cruisers to her programme. In the same year and in the following year, the British Admiralty laid down no armoured cruisers at all.

In 1909, being acquainted with the facts concealed by the Admiralty, the Government were seized with a panic and ordered eight battleships and two armoured cruisers. They also took measures to extend the capacity for constructing gun-mountings.

Hence the sudden and heavy increase in the Navy Estimates in 1909 and succeeding years. The Government were compelled to order the four battleships dropped during the three preceding years, in addition to the four vessels of the programme of the current year. Thus an extra burden of more than eight millions

for battleships alone was suddenly placed upon the Estimates; a burden which, had the Admiralty done what they themselves in 1905 declared to be their duty, would have spread over the three preceding years, and the unseemly spectacle of His Majesty's Ministers fallen a prey to panic would have been spared to an amazed Empire.

It is now, perhaps, clear to those who protest against the increase of the Navy Estimates, why that increase occurred.

There were three years' economies and deferred obligations to be made up.

What is not clear is why His Majesty's Ministers, in explaining the situation to the House of Commons in March, 1909, failed to inform the House that the Admiralty had known of what Sir Edward Grey described as "a new situation" two years and a half before the Government knew, and had deliberately suppressed the facts.

But the Government chose, not only to shield the Admiralty from the just censure of the House of Commons but, to retain in the public service officials who had suppressed information involving the security of the

Empire. The responsibility, constitutionally speaking, rested upon Mr. McKenna, as First Lord. He was not requested to resign, nor did he request the resignation of the members of the Board.

A neighbouring foreign nation was adroitly brought forward by Ministers as the cause of the trouble. Those who profess to seek peace and ensue it may be advised to look at home, and, before indulging in provocative comparisons, to acknowledge that they themselves were to blame.

No later than March 13, 1911, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated in the House of Commons that the "German Naval Law when complete means a navy of thirty-three capital ships, including *Dreadnoughts* and cruisers as well as pre-*Dreadnoughts*."

That statement was grossly incorrect. The German Navy Law of 1900, with its amendments of 1906 and 1908, ordains a Fleet of, not thirty-three but, fifty-eight armoured ships. The error was the subject of comment in Parliament, but Sir Edward Grey has never taken the trouble to correct it. To my knowledge his carelessness has aroused strong

irritation abroad, where it is held that, when the British public discover that the German Fleet is to consist, not of thirty-three armoured ships as officially stated but, of fifty-eight armoured ships, there will be another outcry against German perfidy.

The British public would be better employed in insisting that the British Government should restore the Two-Power standard, which the present Administration abandoned in violation of the repeated and categorical pledges of Ministers, and under which provocative comparisons with friendly Powers were avoided.

XI

THE SHIPBUILDING PROGRAMME

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THE SHIPBUILDING PROGRAMME

On June 30, 1909 (three months after the Government had announced that they were gravely in arrears with all their naval preparations), at the request of the London Chamber of Commerce, I published my suggestion for a shipbuilding programme.

It was to extend over four years, and was to comprise:

16 Battleships.
36 Second-class cruisers.
24 Anti-torpedo-boat destroyers.
52 Torpedo-boat destroyers.
4 Floating docks with accessories.
Provision for floating coal depôts.
Provision for Stores.
Provision for present and future requirements, 19,000 men recruited at the rate of 5,000 a year for four years.

I was criticized in the Press, both for asking too much and for asking too little.

In 1888, when I brought forward a Naval Defence Act, providing seventy vessels at a cost of twenty millions, I was described in the House as an enthusiastic seaman given to exaggeration and generally not to be taken seriously by serious people. Three months later, the same House voted every ship and every pound. Taught by experience, therefore, it was possible to regard with comparative equanimity the attacks made upon me. The event has partly proved that I was justified, and I await, not without confidence, a complete justification.

For the Admiralty, although the country had been repeatedly assured that the Fleet was perfect in every detail, began at once to adopt (without acknowledgment) my proposals. They have not yet, however, adopted them in their entirety.

I am far from claiming that my estimate of requirements is not subject to modification. What I do claim is that it represents the experience of fifty years service in the Royal Navy, applied with the most sedulous care to

the needs of a grave situation. I have given definite reasons for every one of my requirements, which are based upon the practical work of the Navy.

It is not the practice of the First Lord of the Admiralty to give reasons for the provisions contained in the Navy Estimates, nor to explain omissions in those confused and voluminous statements, totally incomprehensible to the taxpayer or to his representatives in the House, for whose benefit they are ostensibly published. It is, therefore, impossible for the public to discover whether or no the Admiralty are fulfilling their responsibilities. The public are deliberately kept in ignorance.

I asked for sixteen battleships, and gave my reasons for the proposal. The Admiralty have provided fourteen battleships, giving no reasons for their provision other than those implied in the course of indiscreet references to a neighbouring Power. I asked for twenty-four anti-torpedo-boat destroyers of a new class designed for special work. The authorities have provided none of these. I asked for fifty-two torpedo-boat destroyers, and of these, the

Admiralty have provided forty, although for years the country was officially informed that the destroyer force was amply sufficient. I asked for thirty-six second-class cruisers for scouting purposes and for the protection of the trade routes, and the Admiralty have provided nine. I asked for four floating docks with accessories and the Admiralty have provided two.[1]

The balance of my programme which has not yet been provided is therefore: two large armoured ships, twenty-four anti-torpedo-boat destroyers, twelve torpedo-boat destroyers, twenty-seven second-class cruisers, and two floating docks.

[1] Lord Charles Beresford's Original Programme . . £68,220,000

Provided for by the Government since Programme was published—

Programme.		£	£
1909–10	4 Armoured Ships (the 4 "Contingent") at £2,000,000 . .	8,000,000	
1910–11	5 Armoured Ships at £2,000,000 .	10,000,000	
	5 Protected Cruisers at £400,000 .	2,000,000	
	20 Destroyers at £100,000 . .	2,000,000	
1911–12	5 Armoured Ships at £2,000,000 .	10,000,000	
	3 Protected Cruisers, 1 Unarmoured Cruiser (say 4 at £400,000)	1,600,000	
	20 Destroyers at £100,000 . .	2,000,000	
			35,600,000
	2 Floating Docks		600,000
			£36,200,000

Joined also 12,900 Men and Boys from March 31, 1910 to March 31, 1911.

Now either my estimate was excessive, or it was not. If it was excessive, I challenge the First Lord of the Admiralty to prove the fact. If it was not excessive, the country is being defrauded.

I may not unreasonably claim that in 1889 my representations were justified to the letter. And to-day, as the Admiralty and the Government have brought in shipbuilding programmes which, in exact proportions as they were palpably at variance with their previous statements, were in accordance with my representations, I shall continue to believe that, at least, I am not yet proved mistaken.

Since 1909, the authorities have insisted upon basing their requirements upon a comparison drawn from the Fleet of one foreign Power alone. But the intentions of that Power, apart from subsidiary increases made known as soon as they were arranged, were published for all the world to see in the year 1900. The extraordinary fluctuations of the British shipbuilding programme cannot then be due to the action of Germany. Those who complain of sudden increases in the Navy Estimates are justified in their protest.

They were misled. They are still being misled.

The following tables show the record at a glance.

SHIPS LAID DOWN BY GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY, 1906—1907 TO 1911—1912.

	GREAT BRITAIN.[1]			GERMANY.		
	Armoured ships.	Small Cruisers.	Destroyers.	Armoured ships.	Small Cruisers.	Destroyers.
1906–7	3	0	2	3	2	12
1907–8	3	1	5	3	2	12
1908–9	2	6	18	4	2	12
1909–10	8	6	22	4	2	12
1910–11	5	5	20	4	2	12
1911–12	5	3	20	4	2	12

[1] Vessels for Dominion Navies excluded. These are:—2 large armoured ships, 3 small cruisers, 6 destroyers. But, with the exception of 1 large armoured ship presented by New Zealand to the United Kingdom, these vessels do not come under Admiralty control.

The result of the naval policy of the last five years with regard to foreign Powers will give the following situation on April 1, 1914, in respect of large armoured ships.

1914.

Great Britain.		Germany.		Triple Alliance.	
Dreadnoughts	22	Dreadnoughts	16	Dreadnoughts	25
Invincibles	10	Invincibles	5	Invincibles	5
pre-Dreadnoughts 15 years old	23	pre-Dreadnoughts 15 years old	18	pre-Dreadnoughts 15 years old	33
	55		39		63

Where is the Two-Power standard? Where is the Two-to-One standard? Where is the half-as-much-again superiority postulated in the Admiralty Memorandum, Cd. 5539? And what is the policy of his Majesty's Government?

If it consists in maintaining the Two-Power standard, it is an utter delusion. We are sixteen ships short of the Two-Power standard. If it consists in maintaining a Two-to-One standard, we should in 1914 possess 78 large armoured ships instead of 55.

I offer no opinion on the subject of policy. I merely indicate the facts. In five years we have forfeited the numerical predominance we held in 1905. During that period, his Majesty's Ministers have constantly asserted the "unassailable superiority" of the Royal Navy.

It is for Parliament to compel Ministers to a definite declaration of policy. If Parliament fails in its duty, the country must take the consequences.

My own view of the situation was expressed in 1909. I affirmed then, as I affirm now, that the passing of a new naval defence act is

essential; that the building programme should be financed by loan; but that, in default of a War Staff at the Admiralty, there can be no assurance either that a defence act will be adequately framed or that the money will be properly expended.

XII

THE MANNING OF THE FLEET

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THE MANNING OF THE FLEET

The key to the policy of illegitimate economy which was pursued by the Admiralty from 1904 to 1909, is the determination to save pay and pension by reducing the *personnel*. In 1904, the provision for an additional 8,000 or 10,000 men made for the future requirements of the Fleet, was secretly cancelled. There followed: the reduction of the establishment, the introduction of the disastrous short-service system, the closing of the coast-guard stations, and the reduction of the coast-guard. The result was that, in 1906, there were not enough men to go round. It is not generally understood that more men are required in peace time than would be required during a war, for the simple reason that in peace time a large number of men are being passed through the training schools—gunnery, torpedo signalling, and the like—ashore. In time of war, the

training schools would be emptied and the men sent to sea. Roughly speaking, the process is a continual series of permutations: at sea, on shore, on leave, and so on. Any dislocation of the process involves a corresponding inefficiency and hardship.

In 1906, owing to the recent increase in the Fleet, for which the required additional men had not been provided, the dislocation occurred. It was no longer possible to supply full crews to the ships in active commission, and nucleus crews to the Reserve ships and contingents for training. The immediate result was that the Admiralty "scrapped" squadrons of valuable ships, and then reduced the sea-going squadrons by nearly 25 per cent., adding the men thereby released to the nucleus crews. Even then there were not enough men properly to work the nucleus crew system. The deplorable mutiny at Portsmouth was largely due to the facts that men in the nucleus crew ships were set to perform dockyard work, the Dockyard establishments having been reduced, and that they were being constantly shifted from ship to ship, according as the need was most urgent.

At the same time the periods of training were shortened. The Fleet was also weakened by the passing of trained seamen into the Reserve before their time, and the simultaneous entry of short-service men, who knew nothing of their duties, and who, so soon as they had learned them, were also passed into the Reserve.

These things do not merely belong to the category of past misdeeds. The situation is worse, if possible, to-day. The Fleet is so short of men that it is constantly found impossible to recommission one ship without taking from another vessel a crew, which, having just completed a commission, are entitled to an interval on shore. The nucleus crews themselves are in a condition which demands a commission of inquiry. Even the new large armoured ships are short of what should be their proper complement.

All information with regard to complements is steadily refused by the First Lord, on the ground that such information is "confidential." The fact, of which Mr. McKenna seems to be ignorant, is, of course, that on the 15th of every month the Regulations provide

that full information as to complements should be supplied by every ship to the Admiralty "for use in the Houses of Parliament."

It was the knowledge of the dangerous deficiency in the *personnel* that induced me, in bringing forward my ship-building programme, to ask for 19,000 more men, the recruiting to be spread over four years. These were to be additional to the 6,000 annually required to make up wastage.

In the year 1909—10 the Admiralty added 3,000 additional men to the Estimates. In the year 1910—11, another additional 3,000 appeared in the Estimates. But what was the real condition of affairs?

In reply to a question, the first Lord stated in the House on May 10, 1911, that the number of men and boys recruited for the Royal Navy between March 31, 1910, and March 31, 1911, was approximately 12,946!

Deducting from the total number the normal figure for wastage, which is about 6,000, there remain (excluding non-combatants) over 6,000 additional men and boys. My estimate of the annual addition required was, not more but, actually less, than this number

There could be only one other test of the justice of my contentions, and that is the test of war ; which the country (by better luck than it deserves) has been spared.

It should not be supposed that the evil years of criminal economy which depleted the *personnel* of the Fleet can be remedied in a moment by joining thousands of men. Five years are required to train a really efficient seaman, and while he is being trained he is necessarily a weak element in a fighting Service. For this reason, the requirements of the Fleet should be estimated long beforehand, so that only a small proportion of new entries should be normally under training. (They were so estimated in 1904 ; and the estimate, as I have said, was secretly cancelled).

The result, therefore, of prolonged neglect, followed by a sudden burst of recruiting, is to flood the Navy with untrained and half-trained men, thereby greatly enlarging the element of weakness. All depends on officers and men : the rest—as the poet has said—is ironmongery.

It is due to the action of the authorities during the period 1904 to 1909, that for years to come the efficiency of the Fleet will be

gravely impaired. During the whole of the period, 1904 to 1909, Parliament was continually and explicitly assured by officials that the numbers of the *personnel* were entirely sufficient. It was not true, and they knew it was not true. That advantage, in which consisted the peculiar superiority of the British Navy over all other Fleets, the long-service trained man has been wantonly impaired.

If the deficiency is to be made up, the recruiting of the men required is only now beginning, and the short service system must be abolished. It is worse than useless to continue to build ships while trained men are withheld.

I will here refer to an ancient wrong done to the officers of the Royal Navy ; the system of half-pay. Naval officers dedicate their lives to their country's service. The country, in return, pays them as little as it can, and takes every opportunity to reduce that little by one half. I say that the half-pay system is a national disgrace.

The restoration of the *personnel* will be expensive. But whose fault is that ?

XIII

PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE

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PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE.

The Declaration of London.

THE whole future of British sea power is dangerously affected by the Declaration of London. Such is the view of one hundred and thirty-eight Admirals on the retired list of the Royal Navy, of seventy-nine of the leading Chambers of Commerce, Shipping Associations, Insurance Associations and public bodies in the United Kingdom, of the Chambers of Commerce in Australia, and of eminent jurists in this country. The terms of the Declaration have been the subject of vigorous protest throughout the country ever since the public were made acquainted with their import. His Majesty's Ministers have proved themselves totally unable to meet the objections urged against the ratification of the Declaration. The attitude of the Government was sufficiently defined by the Prime Minister on June 21, 1911, when, in reply to an observation

made by Mr. Rowland Hunt, reminding him that the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on July 21, 1910, stated that the Declaration of London would not be ratified unless passed by Parliament, Mr. Asquith said that "it will make no difference to the action of His Majesty's Government whether the House of Lords approve or disapprove"; and adding, in reply to a question put by Mr. Remnant, that "this Declaration has been approved by His Majesty's Government after the fullest examination and consideration. They regard it as a matter of high policy, and they are not going to abdicate their responsibility by leaving it an open question."

During the debate on the second reading of the Naval Prize Bill, in which the International Prize Court Convention has been incorporated, and which Bill, if enacted, would imply some sort of constructive acceptance of the Declaration of London, the First Lord of the Admiralty took occasion publicly to insult the officers of the Royal Navy. It was subsequently elicited from Mr. McKenna, by Mr. Rowland Hunt, that the Declaration of London had never been submitted to the

judgment of the Board of Admiralty. "It was," said Mr. McKenna, "approved by the First Sea Lord and myself."

A brief recapitulation of the history of the Declaration of London may serve to elucidate its origin. At the Peace Conference held at the Hague in 1907, the British delegates were instructed by the Government to urge upon the assembly a scheme for general disarmament. The suggestion was politely but firmly dismissed by the foreign delegates. But the British delegates were further instructed to agree to the German proposal for the institution of an International Prize Court of Appeal, in pursuance of that policy of arbitration dear to the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and other amiable visionaries. It cannot be too clearly understood that the object of that policy was the ultimate reduction of the Royal Navy. The intention was (and is) to substitute for effective force a series of paper safeguards and agreements drawn up by international lawyers. It was applauded by the foreign delegates; for, as a matter of fact, it presented them with the opportunity towards which their efforts had been directed since the signature of the Treaty

of Paris in 1856. By that instrument, Great Britain, of her own act, relinquished a powerful weapon in maritime warfare, and the most potent argument for keeping the peace known to history. It was ordained that the neutral flag should cover the enemy cargo, except contraband of war, thereby enfranchising the neutral ship. If, by means of the constitution of an International Prize Court, Great Britain could be induced to forfeit her remaining maritime rights, the labours of foreign maritime Powers, insidiously pursued for more than fifty years, would at length be crowned with success.

That Sir Edward Grey, who is naturally inexperienced in the real workings of international politics, should have walked open-eyed into the snare, need not cause surprise. But that the Board of Admiralty, which was represented at the Hague, should actually have assisted the Foreign Secretary to betray his country, is monstrous.

The thing was done. It was agreed that the International Prize Court of Appeal should be established, in violation of the common law of England, and in derogation of the authority of the King in Council. There were to be

fifteen judges, of whom only one would be British. To this amorphous body British interests were to be absolutely confided.

It was then suddenly discovered that the new tribunal had no code of law upon which to base its decisions. Even the British Government were staggered by the prospect of fourteen foreign judges and one Englishman administering a law that did not exist. So it was decided to make the law. To that end, a Naval Conference was summoned to assemble in London. At that Conference, the Declaration of London was drawn up, and was signed on February 26th, 1909. As might have been expected, the British delegates were out-manœuvred upon every essential point. The most important point of all, whether or not privateering in disguise was to be recognized, the foreign delegates refused to allow to be decided.

As matters stand, the right to convert merchant-ships into warships on the high seas, which is the right, abolished by the Declaration of Paris, to commission privateers, remains an open question, to be decided, according to a statement made by the First Lord of the Admiralty, when the occasion arises.

But under the Declaration of London, the right to sink neutral vessels is for the first time legally recognized. That right, however, does not belong to British warships in cases in which the neutral vessel laden with contraband of war consigned to the enemy, is proceeding to a neutral port. In the United Kingdom, it is open to the enemy to declare all ports "bases of supply."

It is also open to any foreign naval Power secretly to organize an attack upon the British mercantile marine conducted by transformed merchantmen in every quarter of the globe. Under the Declaration of London, if this country were not at war, British merchant-ships would still be liable to destruction as neutrals.

In the *Hamburger Nachrichten* of June 13, 1911, there appear the following comments upon the effect of the Declaration of London:

"A temporary disturbance (even if only partial) in the working of the oversea transport of food supplies would bring about the severest disturbance and crisis in Great Britain and not only in the direction of raising the price of food commodities, but also a financial overthrow and total collapse."

As the German writer justly remarks, this country is faced with the danger not of invasion, but of starvation.

It is argued that the danger would be as great or as little if there were no Declaration of London. The answer is that the very fact that privateering is not mentioned in the new code of law laid down by the Declaration, affords, at least, ground for its justification, and that the sinking of neutrals and prizes, permitted by the Declaration would immensely aggravate the "moral effect" of the outbreak of war, thereby creating in all probability a panic.

But the argument has this much truth in it, that the withdrawal of cruisers from the trade routes in 1905 did then leave the arteries of the Empire open to attack, and open they remain. Before 1905, there were in round number sixty such vessels disposed upon the trade routes. To-day, there are twenty-three.

The Declaration of London also restricts the rights of blockade, as Sir Edward Fry himself admitted. The *Hamburger Nachrichten* of June 13 observes that "the formation of the North Sea is one naturally

favouring a blockade of German sea traffic, and even for what the English call 'the high sea blockade,' by the closing up of the arm of the sea between Scotland and Norway. This is what they call 'sealing the North Sea.' By the Declaration of London such a blockade may not be carried out, as by Article 1 it is provided that a blockade must not extend beyond the ports and coasts belonging to or occupied by the enemy; and Article 18 says that the blockading forces must not bar access to neutral ports or coasts."

The writer ingenuously adds that "in Germany we have received these decisions with exceptional pleasure."

Sir Edward Grey will no doubt be gratified by this unsolicited testimonial to the success of his diplomacy.

British citizens will rather reflect upon the facts that the Declaration of London, representing the result of a determined effort of the Government permanently to reduce the Royal Navy, hands over British maritime rights to a Foreign Court, fails to forbid privateering, permits the sinking of untried neutrals, doubles the danger of starvation in case of war, and,

what is even worse, cripples in every way the action of the British Fleet.

These rules and regulations, and others hardly less injurious to British interests, were drawn by Foreign Office clerks according to the suggestions of alien jurists. But they are the officers of the Royal Navy who will be charged with their execution, and who alone, by education and experience, are qualified to judge of their effect. Naval officers absolutely condemn the Declaration of London. Their business is to fight to win. If, by means of rules drawn up by civilians, naval officers are forced to fight at a disadvantage, they are not to be blamed if they are defeated.

But the Declaration of London affords full opportunity for the enemy to strike a fatal blow before the Navy can use even those powers left to it.

The Second Peace Conference (Conventions) Bill.

Among other acts and deeds of the disastrous Peace Conference of 1907, are fourteen "conventions" signed by the British delegates. The Government propose to authorize the ratification of "various" unnamed conventions among the batch by the Second Peace Conference

(Conventions) Bill. One ofthe conventions gives an International Tribunal the right, exercised through the Secretary of State and the Governors-General of British possessions overseas, to summon a witness from any corner of the globe. The said witness has no appeal. He must produce any documents required of him. No provision is made for payment of his expenses. British subjects are here introduced to one of the privileges resulting from the transference of their legal rights to a foreign tribunal.

Other clauses of the Convention ordain that the master of any British ship, being neutral, and having on board the sick, wounded and shipwrecked men of a belligerent, shall give them up on demand of "any of the belligerent States," and that—incredible as it may seem—the captain of a British hospital ship, having sick and wounded on board when this country is at war, shall give them up at the order of an officer of an enemy warship.

That these despicable and wicked provisions should be sanctioned by any man calling himself British, I cannot believe.

Nor can I avoid the reflection that a country which allows itself to be enmeshed in this

tangle of sentimental agreements, illegal treaties, and lawyers' traps in matters which concern the national honour and the national safety, deserves the irremediable catastrophe which will befall it.

The Mediterranean and Pacific.

By the year 1915, the increase of the Austrian and Italian navies will involve the necessity of placing a squadron of at least eight modern heavy armoured ships in the Mediterranean, thereby reducing our force in Home Waters to an approximate equality with the force of Germany. It may become necessary, in addition, to keep a battle squadron on the China station. At no very distant date, the Panama Canal will be opened: an event which will have the effect of shifting the strategic balance of the world.

These are the most elementary considerations, with which every student of affairs is acquainted. I have yet to learn that the Government have even considered the measures required to meet the needs of a serious situation. It is indeed perfectly obvious that the time of Ministers is fully occupied in dealing with the domestic and purely partisan issues

of the moment, to the neglect of that security upon which all social reform depends.

In so far as the Board of Admiralty is concerned, I can only repeat that until a proper War Staff be constituted at the Admiralty, the Board will remain incapable of dealing with the large questions of strategy involved in the policy of the Government, whatever that policy (if any) may prove to be.

The Dominions' Navies.

The contributions of the Dominions towards the naval defence of the Empire are based upon the principle of local autonomy. New Zealand alone has declared herself in favour of one Imperial Navy. Australia and Canada control their own navies, and reserve the right to decide whether or no in case of war their fleets shall aid the Imperial Government. It follows that, with regard to the naval forces of the Empire, there is dual control; a system which is impracticable in peace and disastrous in war.

The plain fact is that, when in 1909 the representatives of the Dominions were called together in conference to discuss the question of their contribution to the naval defence of the Empire, every difficulty was deliberately

ignored by the Imperial Government, and the Dominions were led to believe that, if they built ships, all would be well.

The discussion of supreme control, of common discipline, of training, of rates of pay, all questions essential to the apprehension of the problem, was postponed.

According to the scheme of defence agreed upon at the Imperial Conference of 1911,[1] which was presented by Sir Wilfred Laurier to the Canadian House of Commons before it was laid before Parliament in this country, the Admiralty are to be responsible for the ships of the Dominions' Navies when those vessels go beyond the areas allotted to them. Such an arrangement cannot be successfully carried into operation. Training and discipline are to be uniform. In default of a single supreme control, such uniformity will be impracticable. The ships of the Dominions' Navies are to "hoist at the stern the white ensign as the symbol of the authority of the Crown, and at the jackstaff the distinctive flag of the Dominion." But the "authority of the Crown" is only to be exercised by

[1] See Appendix XI.

consent of the Dominion Governments; therefore, except in cases when the Admiralty have been asked to assume responsibility for the Dominion Ships, those vessels will not be recognized as warships by foreign Powers.

I do not point out these grave difficulties in order to reflect upon the patriotism and the enterprise of the Dominions; but for the purpose of enabling British subjects to recognize the facts of the case, so sedulously disguised by the authorities. Difficulties may be overcome; but they can never be solved so long as the authorities pretend they do not exist.

As matters stand, it must be said—however disagreeable the task—that the Dominions' Navies cannot be reckoned among the effective naval forces of the Empire.

XIV

A SURVEY OF THE SITUATION

XIV

A SURVEY OF THE SITUATION

The facts above stated cannot with truth be denied. What is the conclusion to be drawn from them? I venture to affirm that there is only one conclusion possible. It is that the naval policy of the years 1902 to 1909 was mistaken in every important particular. From the beginning, the great body of naval opinion held that the new policy was wrong, that it endangered the security of the country and of the Empire, and that the expense of repairing the disastrous effects of a series of rash, violent, and unnecessary experiments would be immense.

Several officers, upon whom fell the disagreeable but inevitable necessity of expressing to the authorities, in response to official request, views adverse to the policy of the Admiralty, have been placed on half-pay and kept without employment, or their

Service careers have been summarily terminated. Among them, three officers would have been ruined by the authorities for daring to tell the truth when, at the request of the authorities themselves, they gave evidence with regard to certain matters, had it not been that public opinion intervened in time to save them from being hunted out of the Service.

These officers were right ; the Navy was right ; and the authorities were wrong.

Since the end of the period of maladministration, whose chief mistakes I have recorded, an honest attempt has been made to remedy them. But the evils have gone too deep to be cured by palliatives and half measures. The first step towards restoration is to understand the extent of the mischief to be repaired.

First in importance is the lack of a War Staff at the Admiralty. Its necessity has been urged by every student of war for the last twenty years and more. Professor Spenser Wilkinson, whose books dealing with the subject of organization for war have exercised so valuable an educational influence, has performed a great public service in this regard. It was in 1886, twenty-five years ago,

that I drew up a memorandum proposing the establishment of a Naval Intelligence Department, to form the basis of a proper War Staff, charged with the duty of organization for war. The department was formed, and there the scheme ended. Its progress remains arrested at that point to-day.

The present Government have now admitted the necessity of constituting a War Staff. In the report of the Beresford Committee of 1909, Ministers stated that "they look forward with much confidence to the further development of a Naval War Staff."

Their confidence has not hitherto been justified. Yet the creation of a War Staff, or Admiral Staff, is the first essential condition alike of right reform and organization for war.

I do not hesitate to affirm that, had a War Staff been in existence, most of the disastrous and costly mistakes of the last few years would not have occurred. Nor is there any known method of avoiding such errors in the future, except by means of the creation of a War Staff.

Next in importance there falls to be con-

sidered the education and training of officers, upon whom the whole efficiency of the Fleet depends. The scheme of 1902, altered in 1904, is proving utterly impracticable. If the Fleet is not to be left gravely deficient in Marine and Engineer officers, measures must at once be taken to remedy the fatal defects of the existing system. The postponement by the Admiralty of the specialization of officers for another two years (dating from May, 1911) will only serve to aggravate the evil.

The force of ships required is the next consideration. I have of my own personal knowledge, acquired in commanding fleets in various quarters of the globe, affirmed that the Fleet is gravely deficient in small cruisers and destroyers. It is so deficient as to impair the ability of action of the battle squadrons of heavy ships.

The essential requirements of a battle squadron in time of war may be briefly indicated. The proportion of cruisers should be five cruisers to every two battleships or large armoured cruisers. The small cruiser force must be disposed so that they form a protecting screen distant 120 or 140 miles on all

sides from the battle squadron. By no other means is it possible to move a battle squadron at night without risking its destruction by the attack of torpedo craft. No anti-torpedo armament can effectually protect a fleet of battleships attacked at night by squadrons of torpedo craft.

In this respect again the attempts of the authorities to make up deficiencies cannot avail to attain their object, because they are working without an organization for war.

Precisely the same considerations apply to the grave deficiencies in coal reserve, in stores, in docks. The lack of proper provision of these items is common knowledge throughout the Navy.

Next in importance is the deficiency in the *personnel.* That deficiency will continue, in spite of the belated efforts of the authorities hastily to remedy it, until there exists a War Staff which alone is competent to decide for what purposes the men are required, how many are required, and how they should be distributed.

The present condition of the Trade Routes alone affords sufficient evidence for the

necessity of a War Staff. In 1903, there were sixty small cruisers placed on foreign stations. To-day, there are twenty-three. In the interval two events have occurred of the gravest moment to the country.

If the Declaration of London be ratified, merchant ships will not be forbidden to be transformed on the high seas into ships of war.

All ships of war are permitted to sink neutral prizes at the option of the enemy commander.

In other words, privateering, abolished by the Declaration of Paris of 1856, has in effect been insidiously revived by the Peace Conference of 1907.

In 1903, the only danger to the Trade Routes to be apprehended was the attack upon commerce by naval warships. It was under these conditions considered necessary to keep a large force of cruisers on foreign stations. To-day, when the danger may be multiplied tenfold by the new license proposed to be accorded to merchantmen, the number of cruisers on foreign stations has been diminished by about two-thirds, nor is there

any force in the Home ports ready to reinforce them. The cruisers allocated for that duty are reserve ships which, as their complements consist of Royal Naval Reserve men, could not be manned until after the outbreak of war, when it would be too late. These vessels are also unsuitable for this particular service.

The result is that our sea-borne trade upon whose punctual arrival in this country the life of its people depends, is left open to sudden and secretly organized attack on the high seas, conducted by merchant vessels which, a few hours previously, were receiving the shelter of neutral harbours as non-combatants, and which a few hours later may repair to the same harbours to take in supplies before embarking upon new adventures.

The condition of affairs is due in the first instance to what is called the Peace Conference of 1907, which resolved itself into a conclave engaged in making rules to regulate maritime war. If the Declaration of London, drawn up by foreign plenipotentiaries at the invitation of British Ministers, be ratified, a greater betrayal of British maritime rights will have been consummated than even

the indefensible betrayal embodied in the Declaration of Paris of 1856.

I am aware that some eminent jurists do not share this view. But these gentlemen perhaps forget that war is not an affair of legal documents, but a question of fighting, to be settled by fighting men. The lawyer can do nothing but devise rules and regulations for the conduct of war. It is not the lawyer but the fighting man who is charged with the business of winning battles, and who is therefore alone competent to frame the rules of warfare.

It is for his Majesty's Government to decide whether there shall or shall not be war. But once war is declared, it is the business of the naval officer to win the campaign. The politicians cannot teach him his business, and if they interfere in its conduct, it is not the naval officer who is to blame for the result.

When the First Lord was asked in the House of Commons whether, in view of the official statement that the Government did not admit the right of foreign nations to convert merchant ships into men-of-war on the high seas, he would state what action the Government would take if foreign merchant

ships were so converted, Mr. McKenna said that "the action to be taken will be a matter for the decision of the Government when the occasion arises."

We are then to understand that no measures are to be taken until it is too late. In the days of privateering, merchant ships were armed, and this country was then self-supporting. Now that privateering has been revived, and the country is almost entirely dependent upon food supplied from overseas, the mercantile marine is left to take its chance.

There is only one method of securing the safety of the roads of the sea: to station cruisers there on patrol duty. We have, however, thrown away the ships formerly used for that purpose, and a new force is only now beginning slowly to be created. It is also to be remembered that the small cruisers recently built, or now in course of construction, are required to work with the Fleet.

The coaling and repairing stations overseas, which served as naval bases for ships of war on passage and for the cruiser patrols, have been dismantled and their stores have been sold.

These things were done in accordance with the recommendations of the Owen Commission, against which protests were made by the local authorities in every quarter of the globe, especially with regard to the damage inflicted at Malta, Gibraltar, and upon the China and East Indies Stations. In reply to these protests, it was stated that the Admiralty would in future undertake the defence of naval bases.

The mine-fields were all abolished, and the guns were dismantled or removed. The mine-fields at home and at one or two places abroad were shortly afterwards replaced at a cost of thousands of pounds.

At Rangoon, to which place the oil, an invaluable prize, is conducted in pipes, the mines were removed. Trincomalee, the most important naval base in Eastern waters, is left without a soldier or a gun.

Our own scheme of defence against floating mines sown in home waters has broken down, owing to the failure of the Admiralty to make suitable arrangements with the deep-sea fishermen required to man the trawlers allocated for mine-sweeping duties.

It is to be remembered that in the Russo-Japanese war, eleven Japanese ships of which two were battleships, and six Russian ships of which one was a battleship, were sunk, while three Japanese and four Russian vessels, were badly damaged by mines.

The Russo-Japanese war from beginning to end afforded a supreme demonstration of the essential value of organization for war and of the penalty which inevitably attaches to its neglect.

In our own Service, individual officers, particular crews, and single ships, have never been more efficient. But the Fleet, as a whole, taking into consideration its vastly increased responsibilities with regard to the protection of wealth in transportation, and the rise to power of foreign navies, has seldom been less adequate.

When the people behold the Fleet arrayed in review order, they receive an impression of overwhelming strength. But what they cannot see are the forces which the Fleet has to encounter, and the tasks which it has to fulfil.

At the Coronation Review were 32 battleships, 25 armoured cruisers — 57 heavy armoured ships in all—*and only nine protected*

cruisers. But the heavy armoured ships depend for their utility upon their complementary units. Deprived as they are of these, they are a present to the enemy.

Here is the conclusion of the whole matter: We possess no proper organization for war, nor can we obtain it until a War Staff is established at the Admiralty; but until we have organized the Fleet for war, our excellent officers, our skilled crews, and fine ships are liable to be sacrificed in the most bitter of all sacrifices, that by which nothing is gained; while—what is of less moment—our money may all be spent in vain.

APPENDIX

I

EXTRACT FROM ADMIRALTY MEMORANDUM 16TH DECEMBER, 1902 (PARLIAMENTARY PAPER CD. 1385).

. . . The cardinal feature of the scheme is the homogeneous training of Executive, Engineer, and Marine Officers. The policy of the Board is to create a body of young officers who at the moment of mobilization for war will be equally available for all the general duties of the Fleet, and to consolidate into one harmonious whole the fighting officers of the Navy. . . .

II

EXTRACT FROM ADMIRALTY MEMORANDUM OF 16TH DECEMBER, 1902, PAGE 3, (PARLIAMENTARY PAPER CD. 1385).

New Scheme.

It has been decided that henceforth—

1. All officers for the Executive and Engineer branches of the Navy and for the

Royal Marines shall enter the Service as Naval Cadets under exactly the same conditions between the ages of twelve and thirteen.

2. That these Cadets shall all be trained on exactly the same system until they shall have passed for the rank of Sub-Lieutenant between the ages of nineteen and twenty.

3. That at about the age of twenty these Sub-Lieutenants shall be distributed between the three branches of the service which are essential to the fighting efficiency of the Fleet —the Executive, the Engineer, and the Marine.

The result aimed at is, to a certain point community of knowledge and lifelong community of sentiment. The only machinery which can produce this result is early companionship and community of instruction. These opportunities will be secured by a policy of—

One System of Supply.
One System of Entry.
One System of Training.

III

Extract from Admiralty Memorandum "Navy, a Statement of Admiralty Policy, 30th November, 1905" (Parliamentary Paper Cd. 2791).

. . . This question has received earnest

consideration, and, so far as concerns those entered under the New System it has been decided that all Executive, Engineering, and Marine duties will be performed by Executive officers of common entry and training, who will specialise for the different duties without separating into permanent and distinct branches. The consequence of this development of the original proposals is that there will be in future only one class of officer in all departments, and whether performing Engine-room, Marine, Gunnery, Torpedo, or Navigation duties, all will be equal and all will be Executive Officers. . . .

IV

Extract from Admiralty Memorandum "Navy, a Statement of Admiralty Policy, 30th November, 1905" (Parliamentary Paper Cd. 2791).

Since the first two years of the training of Cadets under the new system has now been completed, an estimate can be formed of what the attainments of these officers will be at the end of their sea training as Midshipmen. The success with which this critical stage of the tuition has been passed justifies the opinion that the progress of the Cadets during their remaining courses at Dartmouth College in the training Cruisers, and throughout the

three years sea service as Midshipmen, will proceed on normal lines, and it now appears certain that the full advantages which were expected to be derived from the early and thorough grounding in Scientific, Engineering, and general Professional Subjects will be obtained. It is also possible to forecast the general state of professional knowledge of the new officers when they arrive at the rank of Sub-Lieutenants, and definite conclusions can be formed as to the amount of special education which will afterwards be necessary to fit them for undertaking the special duties of the various branches of the Service, and also as to the general lines which these specialist courses must follow. . . .

V

House of Commons, 20th July, 1911.

Lord Charles Beresford asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether, under the Cawdor Memorandum of 1905 (Cd. 2791), officers were to be specialized; whether the midshipmen who should have obtained the rank of Sub-Lieutenant in May, 1911, have been put back for two years; and, if so, whether he will state the reason why the Admiralty took this step?

Mr. McKenna.—It is not understood what exact meaning is conveyed by the use of the

expression "have been put back for two years." Under the Cawdor Memorandum no officer would have been withdrawn from sea to specialize until at least two years from the date of becoming Sub-Lieutenant, one year of which must have been served at sea. Under the existing arrangements (announced in circular letter of 1st May, 1908), officers must serve for two years from the date of becoming Sub-Lieutenant, either as Sub-Lieutenant or Lieutenant. In every case at least one year must have been as Lieutenant at sea before becoming eligible to specialize.

VI

House of Commons, 6th April, 1909.

Mr. Carr-Gomm asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether his attention had been called to some extracts from a letter alleged to have been written three years ago by a captain of six years' seniority to Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher; whether he is aware that a charge has been publicly made that this letter revealed a system of espionage, and that the captain who wrote it criticized his superior officers wholesale; and whether he proposes to take any steps in the matter?

Mr. McKenna.—The letter in question was written by Captain R. H. Bacon, now

Director of Naval Ordnance, an officer who has the full confidence of the Board of Admiralty. I have read the letter; it is a perfectly proper letter to have been written by Captain Bacon, and I cannot find in it the smallest ground for any of the calumnious charges which have been based upon it. It contains no opinion of Captain Bacon concerning his commanding officers or criticism of any officers in the Fleet.

VII

House of Commons, July 30, 1908.

Viscount Castlereagh asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether any communication had been received at the Admiralty from the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet with reference to a serious collision having been imminent between the "Good Hope" and the "Argyll," owing to an order given by the Commander-in-Chief.

Mr. McKenna: The Board have had reported to them, and have examined the positions of the Fleet at the moment that the order of the Commander-in-Chief was signalled, and they were satisfied that the manœuvre was not dangerous. At the same time, the Rear-Admiral, as he thought that there was risk in carrying out the order, was

justified in turnin g the other way, and the Commander-in-Chief so informed him by signal at the time.

Mr. Bellairs: Will the right hon. gentleman convey that answer to the editors of those papers which erroneously accused Lord Charles Beresford of having endangered the lives of 1,600 men?

Mr. McKenna: I think it is always desirable to avoid communication with the Press.

Sir G. Parker: Is the right hon. gentleman now speaking for the whole of his colleagues?

Mr. McKenna: I do not think that I should be called upon to answer that question.

Earl Winterton asked what steps it was proposed to take to ascertain the name of the officer, who, in defiance of the King's Regulations, recently communicated to a newspaper an account of an alleged incident in the Channel Fleet; and would the officer, if his name was disclosed, be tried by court-martial?

Mr. McKenna: I am not aware what grounds the noble lord has for imputing a breach of honour to any naval officer. If he will state them, or communicate them to me privately, I will investigate them. *They are quite unknown to me.*

Earl Winterton: I made no allegation

of breach of honour, but rather of breach of regulations. I shall raise the matter on the Appropriation Bill.

Mr. McKenna : In my judgment, the suggestion in the question is such as to constitute a breach of honour.

Earl Winterton : That surely is a matter of opinion. My question was as to a matter of fact.

Mr. Bellairs : Does the right hon. gentleman propose to enquire how this information leaked out ?

The Speaker : The hon. member must give notice of that.

At midnight, while the discussion on the motion for the second reading was in progress,

Earl Winterton drew attention to the serious leakage of information in connection with the Navy, especially with reference to the communication which recently appeared in the " Times " to the effect that Lord Charles Beresford had jeopardized the safety of two of His Majesty's ships. Drastic steps, he said, should be taken to prevent such false statements being circulated, and to ascertain who was responsible for circulating them.

Mr. McKenna said that *he had no knowledge who sent the message, and it was impossible for him to find out.* He assumed that the original communication was sent by some person in the Fleet to somebody on shore.

Mr. Claude Hay: Not by wireless telegraphy?

Mr. McKenna: If it had been so sent the Admiralty would have known of it. The suggestion is ludicrous. Continuing, the right hon. gentleman remarked that all the comments were made, not by the original communicator, but by the Press. It would be most unfair to suggest that any officer or person in the Service was in the least degree responsible for those comments. The gravamen of the charge did not lie in the fact of the signal, but in the comments on the signal. After the explanation he had given at question time he trusted that the whole incident, which had been a most unhappy one, would be allowed to drop.

VIII

Extract from Sir Edward Grey's Speech in the House of Commons, 29th March, 1909.

"... With regard to the capacity for building hulls and propelling machinery, our capacity is considerably in excess of the German capacity; and in the manufacture of guns of the largest size we believe that our capacity for output is also superior. *The Doubtful Point of the Situation is our Comparative Capacity for the Construction of Gun Mountings* ..."

IX

Notes supplied by the Admiralty for the Use of the War Office in the Debate that was to have taken place in November, 1910, in the House of Lords, on a Motion by Lord Roberts.

The really serious danger that this country has to guard against in war is not invasion, but interruption of our trade and destruction of our Merchant Shipping.

The main object aimed at by our Fleet, whether for the defence of commerce or for any other purpose, is to prevent any ship of the enemy from getting to sea far enough to do any mischief before she is brought to action. Any disposition that is even moderately successful in attaining this object will almost certainly be effective in preventing a large fleet of transports, than which nothing is more vulnerable or more difficult to hide, from reaching our shores.

To realise the difficulty that an enemy would have in bringing such a fleet of transports to our coast and disembarking an army, it is necessary to remember that all the ships operating in home waters, whether they are in the North Sea, the Channel, or elsewhere, are in wireless communication with the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief, so that if a fleet of transports is sighted anywhere

by a single cruiser, or even by a merchant ship if she is fitted with wireless, every ship which happened to be in a position to intercept the transports would at once get the order to concentrate as necessary for the purpose, whether she was at sea or in harbour.

It is further necessary to remember that, even supposing that by some extraordinary lucky chance the transports were able to reach our coast without being detected, their presence must be known when they arrive there; and long before half the troops could be landed, the transports would be attacked and sunk by submarines which are stationed along the coast for that purpose.

Besides the submarines there would be always a large force of destroyers, either in the ports along the coast or within wireless call, as, in addition to those that may be definitely detailed for coast defence, the system of reliefs for those acting over sea will ensure a large number being actually in harbour at their respective bases, or within call while going to or returning from their stations.

These destroyers, though not specially stationed with that object, will always form, in conjunction with submarines, a very effective second line of defence in the improbable event of such a second line being required.

To understand thoroughly the small chance of an invasion from the other side of the

North Sea being successful, it is necessary to put oneself in the place of the officer who has to undertake the responsibility of conducting it.

His first difficulty will be to consider how he is to get his great fleet of transports to sea without any information of it leaking out through neutral nations or otherwise.

Next, he will consider that somewhere within wireless call we have nearly double the number of battleships and cruisers that he can muster, besides a swarm of destroyers.

He has probably very vague and unreliable information as to their positions which are constantly changing.

His unwieldy fleet will cover many square miles of water, and as all the ships will be obliged to carry lights for mutual safety, they will be visible nearly as far by night as by day. How can he hope to escape discovery?

Many of his transports will have speeds of not more than ten to twelve knots, so that there will be no hope for escape by flight if he is met by a superior force.

If he is sighted by any of our destroyers at night they will have little difficulty in avoiding the men-of-war and torpedoing the transports.

Is it possible to entice part of our fleet away by any stratagem? Possibly. But even if he succeeds in drawing off half our fleet, the other half, in conjunction with destroyers and submarines, would be quite sufficient to sink

the greater part of his transports, even if supported by the strongest fleet he could collect. The fleets would engage each other while the destroyers and submarines torpedoed the transports.

Finally, even if he reached the coast in safety, he would see that it was quite impossible to guard his transports against the attacks of submarines while he was landing the troops; and that it was quite certain that a superior force would be brought to attack him before the landing could be completed.

Taking all these facts into consideration, he would probably decide as the Admiralty have done, that an invasion on even the moderate scale of 70,000 men is practically impossible.

X

HOUSE OF COMMONS, 21ST FEBRUARY, 1911.

MR. GRETTON asked the First Lord of the Admiralty if the Memorandum attached to the book named "Compulsory Service" and signed "A.K.W." was submitted and approved by the Board of Admiralty before its appearance in an unofficial publication emanating from another Department of the Government?

MR. MCKENNA: There was no Board meeting on the Memorandum referred to, but it was published with my approval.

MR. GRETTON: If there was no Board

meeting was the Memorandum submitted to the members separately?

Mr. McKenna: The First Sea Lord is the special member of the Board who deals with subjects of that kind.

Earl Winterton: Are we to understand that it was not submitted to the Board as a whole?

Mr. McKenna: The noble lord must not understand from what I have stated anything beyond what I have stated.

Earl Winterton: Then will the right hon. gentleman answer the original question?

Mr. McKenna: I have answered it, and I will repeat my answer for the noble lord's benefit: "There was no Board meeting on the Memorandum referred to, but it was published with my approval."

Lord Hugh Cecil asked a question which was inaudible to the official reporter.

Mr. McKenna: The noble lord is probably unaware of the constitution of the Board of Admiralty. If any member of the Board submits to me a document, and I approve it, that document has the approval of the Board of Admiralty.

XI

Memorandum agreed upon by the Representatives of Great Britain and the Oversea Dominions at the Imperial Conference of 1911.

The Memorandum is as follows :—

I.—The naval Services and forces of the Dominions of Canada and Australia will be exclusively under the control of their respective Governments.

II.—The training and discipline of the naval forces of the Dominions will be generally uniform with the training and discipline of the Fleet of the United Kingdom, and by arrangement the officers and men of the said forces will be interchangeable with those under the control of the British Admiralty.

III.—The ships of each Dominion naval force will hoist at the stern the white ensign as the symbol of the authority of the Crown, and at the Jack staff the distinctive flag of the Dominion.

IV.—The Canadian and Australian Governments will have their own naval stations as agreed upon from time to time. The limits of the stations are as described in Schedule A (Canada) and Schedule B (Australia).

V.—In the event of the Canadian or Australian Government desiring to send ships to a part of the British Empire outside their own

respective stations they will notify the British Admiralty.

VI.—In the event of the Canadian or Australian Government desiring to send ships to a foreign port they will obtain the concurrence of the Imperial Government in order that the necessary arrangements with the Foreign Office may be made, as in the case of ships of the British Fleet, in such time and manner as are usual between the British Admiralty and the Foreign Office.

VII.—While the ships of the Dominions are at a foreign port a report of their proceedings will be forwarded by the officer in command to the Commander-in-Chief of the station, or to the British Admiralty. An officer in command of a Dominion ship, so long as he remains in a foreign port, will obey any instructions he may receive from the Government of the United Kingdom as to the conduct of any international matter that may arise, the Dominion Government being informed. A commanding officer of a Dominion ship having to put into a foreign port without previous arrangement on account of stress of weather, damage, or any unforeseen emergency, will report his arrival and reason for calling to the Commander-in-Chief of the station or to the Admiralty, and will obey, so long as he remains in the foreign port, any instructions he may receive from the Government of the United Kingdom as to his relations with the

authorities, the Dominion Government being informed.

VIII.—The commanding officer of a Dominion ship having to put into a foreign port without previous arrangement on account of stress of weather, damage, or any unforeseen emergency will report his arrival and reason for calling to the Commander-in-Chief of the station or to the Admiralty, and will obey, so long as he remains in the foreign port, any instructions he may receive from the Government of the United Kingdom as to his relations with the authorities, the Dominion Government being informed.

IX.—When a ship of the British Admiralty meets a ship of the Dominion the senior officer will have the right of command in matters of ceremony, of international intercourse, or where united action is agreed upon, but will have no power to direct the movement of ships of the other Service unless the ships are ordered to co-operate by mutual agreement.

X.—In foreign ports the senior officer will take command, but not so as to interfere with orders that the junior officer may have received from his own Government.

XI.—When a court martial has to be ordered by a Dominion and a sufficient number of officers are not available in the Dominion Service at the time, the British Admiralty, if requested, will make the necessary arrangements to enable a court to

be formed. Provision will be made by Order of His Majesty in Council and the Dominion Governments to define the conditions under which the officers of the different services are to sit on joint courts-martial.

XII.—The British Admiralty undertakes to lend to the Dominions during the period of development of their services, under conditions to be agreed upon, such flag officers and other officers and men as may be needed. In their selection preference shall be given to officers and men coming from or connected with the Dominion, but they should all be volunteers to the Service.

XIII.—The service of officers of the British Fleet in the Dominion naval forces, or of officers of these forces in the British Fleet, will count in all respects for promotion, pay, retirement, &c., as service in their respective forces.

XIV.—In order to determine all questions of seniority that may arise, the names of all officers will be shown in the Navy List and their seniority determined by the date of their commission, whichever is the earlier in the British, Canadian, or Australian Services.

XV.—It is desirable in the interest of efficiency and co-operation that arrangements should be made from time to time between the British Admiralty and the Dominions for ships of the Dominions to take part in fleet exercises, or for any other joint training

considered necessary, under the senior naval officer. While so employed the ships will be under the command of that officer, who would not, however, interfere in the internal economy of the ships of another Service further than may be absolutely necessary.

XVI.—In time of war, when the Naval Service of a Dominion or any part thereof has been put at the disposal of the Imperial Government by the Dominion authorities, the ships will form an integral part of the British Fleet and will remain under the control of the British Admiralty during the continuance of the war.

XVII.—The Dominions having applied to their naval forces the King's Regulations, Admiralty Instructions, and the Naval Discipline Act, the British Admiralty and the Dominion Governments will communicate to each other any changes which they propose to make in these Regulations or that Act.

The Schedules.

Schedule A (Canada).

The Canadian Atlantic Station will include the waters north of 30 deg. North latitude, and west of meridian 40 deg. West longitude.

The Canadian Pacific Station will include the waters north of 30 deg. North latitude, and east of meridian 180 deg. longitude.

Schedule B (Australia).

The Australian Naval Station will include on the north from 95 deg. East longitude by parallel 13 deg. South latitude to 120 deg. East longitude, thence north to 11 deg. South latitude, thence to the boundary with Dutch New Guinea on the south coast in about longitude 141 deg. East, thence along the coast of British New Guinea to the boundary with German New Guinea in latitude 8 deg. South, thence east to 155 deg. East longitude.

On the east by the meridian of 155 deg. East longitude to 15 deg. South latitude, thence to 28 deg. South latitude on the meridian of 170 deg. longitude, thence south to 32 deg. South latitude, thence west of the meridian of 160 deg. East longitude, thence south.

On the south by the Antarctic Circle.

On the west by the meridian of 95 deg. East longitude.

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